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ABSTRACT

This report examines some of the many varieties of alternatives now available, their problems and pitfalls, and their hopes for the future. After defining alternative schools, the report discusses the rationale for having alternatives and then summarizes the range of alternatives available at both the elementary and secondary levels. Separate chapters are devoted to open plan schools; minischools; Elementary alternatives; dropout schools; schools for slow learners, superior students, and for those students with other special problems; schools for racial or ethnic groups; and open schools for all students. Throughout the report descriptions of existing alternative programs in various parts of the country are presented. Chapters at the end of the report present advice on starting an alternative school, evaluating the school and its students, and on the financing and costs of an alternative school program. A 42-item annotated bibliography is included. (DN)

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ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

EDUCATION U.S.A.
SPECIAL REPORT

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ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS: PIONEERING DISTRICTS CREATE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS

A Publication of the National School Public Relations Association

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Education U.S.A., the independent weekly education newsletter founded in 1958, has introduced new dimensions to educational journalism in the United States. In addition to the newsletter, which reports major developments in preschool to graduate level education, the editors of *Education U.S.A.* prepare special in-depth reports on current education issues and problems.

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The special reports are prepared when the editors decide that a new development in education is important enough to be covered in detail. *Alternative Schools: Pioneering Districts Create Options for Students* is the latest report in this series.

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ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

OVERVIEW

A growing number of students, teachers, parents and school administrators are openly unhappy with "one teacher--30 kids--four walls--keep it quiet--now it's time for spelling" schools. They are pressing for alternatives to traditional, homogenous schools within public education.

And in many cases they are succeeding. Nationwide, 60 districts are now operating or planning about 200 alternative projects. More will develop, as evidenced by the interest in a new organization, The National Consortium on Educational Alternatives. Although the type of alternative may vary from district to district, all share the philosophy of providing students and parents with a choice in education. Alternative programs also enable communities to avoid having to decide between traditional and innovative schools. Instead, they offer a range of different options for different needs--and for all types of students. Most cater to the needs of the secondary school student, but others are specifically designed for the elementary-age youngster.

One variety of alternative now in operation--a dropout center in St. Paul, Minn.--is described by its director, Kenneth Osvold, as similar to "an intensive care unit of a modern hospital--with each student getting the attention he needs from a staff of specialists."

Other alternative programs meet the special needs of special students--those who are academically failing, disruptive or emotionally disturbed. For them, the alternative program must be based on a sincere and extensive effort of rehabilitation, while providing an opportunity to continue their education.

Some alternative programs, on the other hand, serve the more able student who is often overlooked in many public schools as long as he keeps quiet and gets A's. Like his underachieving fellow student, the more capable student often needs the challenge and stimulation offered by a specially designed program, proponents of alternative schools say.

Another option, the mini-school, is being tried in an attempt to end the anonymity

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of the super-sized high school by dividing it into smaller, more manageable units.

Probably the most controversial of the alternative schools to date are those catering to particular racial or ethnic groups. Presently, two ethnic-oriented school programs operating in the Berkeley, Calif., district--"Black House" and "Casa de la Raza"--have been cited by the federal government for alleged violation of the Civil Rights Act.

Other problems have surfaced. One big, continuing one is financing. Though some alternative schools are being funded by federal and foundation grants, most must expect--and probably should welcome--operating on the same per-pupil budgets as do other schools in their systems. Some alternative programs, however, were started in an attempt to cut some of the normal school costs. The "school without walls"--probably the most written about and talked about type of alternative--saves money by using community resources and talent for the backbone of its curriculum.

Some critics complain that alternative programs are too democratic for their own good, that every decision must be referred to a committee and no one is prepared to take final responsibility. Another problem is evaluation. Most programs have not been operating long enough to have permitted meaningful comparative evaluation. One comparison being made by educators and others is that of the alternative school movement and private "free" schools. Alternative programs within public school systems have been stimulated both by the rapid spurt in "free" schools and by the poor survival rate of many of these small, hastily organized, poorly funded and overly ambitious private schools.

Proponents point out that alternative programs--like any innovation--need time to work out the kinks. They concede that such programs probably are subject to more problems than the traditional school--many of whose faults may go generally unnoticed because they have been present for so long.

This Special Report will examine the many varieties of alternatives now available, their problems and pitfalls and hopes for the future.

WHAT ARE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS?

While many "free schools" have been started outside school systems in recent years, there is now also a grass-roots movement for alternatives within public education. Such alternative schools, as well as private "free schools," offer students alternatives to typical, traditionally organized public schools.

Alternative schools, by definition, come in many sizes and shapes and with varying objectives and philosophies. That students or parents have a choice in selecting an educational program is basic to all. Alternative schools recognize that different students may do better in different types of schools and, therefore, stress variety rather than uniformity. They are organized in many different ways with various kinds of student bodies. But all involve a total educational program. They occur at any educational level, elementary or secondary, though there has been more effort thus far to establish alternatives for high school students, who are more vocal than elementary-age youngsters in their complaints about education-as-usual.

Many alternative schools are innovative and open, but some are traditional and formal. To provide true alternatives, this choice within the system must exist. Most alternative schools are small, but there are no size limitations. Many are physically separate from other schools, but some share a large school building with other alternative programs, though each is administratively independent. Many are not confined to a single building and consider an entire city as their schoolhouse.

Involvement and Options: Two Basics

Some alternative schools depend heavily upon involvement of students, parents and volunteer instructors in the community. Students and teachers often play a large role in making decisions usually reserved entirely for administrators in other schools. Through such involvement and, more importantly, by offering basic options, alternative schools give students a greater chance to chart their own educational course.

"The idea of providing alternative learning options is based on an entirely different conception of change. For rather than 'pushing people around,' you provide options that attract people to them. They choose. They make decisions," said Mario Fantini, dean of education at State U. College, New Paltz, N.Y., and a strong advocate of alternative schools. "I would like to see a situation where people stop making decisions for other people and let them make decisions for themselves," Fantini said.

The Range of Alternatives: Secondary Level

The kinds of alternative programs that can be developed are limited only by a school system's needs and willingness to meet those needs. Without being exhaustive, here are the best known types of alternative secondary schools:

- "Schools without walls," where students work and study in museums, businesses, hospitals and other places in the community and learn that learning is not limited to a school building.

- Mini-schools or "schools within schools," which can subdivide huge high schools of 3,000 or more students into small, personal units of, for example, 150 students and six teachers who may focus their studies around a special interest such as aviation, art or anthropology.

- Dropout centers, where school dropouts can get the basic education and vocational skills they missed in regular schools. With about 25% of the nation's students leaving school before graduation, most communities could use such a center.

- Schools for students with special problems, such as academically failing, disruptive or pregnant students who, without such special programs, would probably leave or be forced out of school.

- Open schools for able students frustrated by typical, traditionally organized schools. Individualized study and self-direction are stressed but, unlike "schools without walls," the program is centered in one building.

- Schools for racial or ethnic groups who feel victimized by traditional schools. While supported by their proponents as necessary for the educational and spiritual rehabilitation of their students, some of these schools have been attacked as discriminatory.

The Range of Alternatives: Elementary Level

At the elementary level, some of the basic types of alternative schools are:

- The traditional, teacher-oriented school with self-contained classrooms.

- The continuous-progress school in which students advance at their own pace along a carefully sequenced curriculum.

- The open school utilizing flexible curriculum, scheduling and age-grouping to enable children to take more initiative for their own education.

- The "free" school--the most experimental--which emphasizes independent study and one-to-one tutoring and has few across-the-board requirements.

- Schools within schools, offering students many different options.

Examples of these basic types of alternative schools will be discussed more thoroughly in later sections. It should be reemphasized that these gen-

eral catagories are not all-inclusive. For example, on the secondary level, the rather familiar vocational-technical high school is an alternative for many students. Some cities have special alternative schools for the most academically or artistically talented, regardless of where they reside. There are even "wilderness schools" through which groups of 50 to 100 students and several teachers can learn about the natural environment and themselves while taking part in rugged but rewarding outdoor camping.

At the elementary level there are also many possible variations. One that cuts across the elementary-secondary distinction is an open school that includes all students from kindergarten to the 12th-grade level. Another is to subdivide an elementary school to provide several types of alternatives in the same building. For example, an 18-room school may continue to have six rooms operating as traditional self-contained classrooms while developing team teaching in another third of the school and perhaps, by taking down a wall or two, turning the final six classrooms into an informal, open school.

What Isn't an Alternative

Alternative school programs within public education are new and few enough that there still is much confusion over just what should properly be given that designation. An alternative program is a total program that requires all or most of a student's time. He may take French outside his alternative school, but a student in a traditional school isn't part of an alternative program merely because he can choose between taking French or Spanish one period a day.

The most basic requirement for an alternative school program is that students or parents choose it. Team teaching, multimedia instruction, nongraded classes, programmed instruction, new curricula, modular scheduling, individualized instruction or compensatory education may each be a valuable innovation, but none is necessarily part of an alternative program unless there is that genuine option.

This does not mean that an alternative school must accept every student who applies. Most alternative schools are small and popular and, therefore, have more applicants than places. Students may be chosen by lottery, on a first-come, first-serve basis or by competitive selection. They may be partially screened by sex, racial and economic-group quotas. Ideally, of course, a school system would have enough alternatives and enough flexibility to meet the changing needs and interests of all its students. At least one school system has suggested that its kindergarten is an alternative program. In one sense, it might seem to be, because the kindergarten is voluntary and therefore chosen by the parents for their child. However, since this is the system's only type of kindergarten, it offers no choice within public education.

Why Have Alternatives?

Supporters of the alternative schools philosophy say it is rooted firmly in the bedrock of a free society. Indiana U.'s Educational Alternatives Project said, "The concept of educational alternatives is consistent with our

democratic heritage and political philosophy. Democratic living implies the freedom of individual choice. The monolithic structure of the American public schools has tended to deny communities the right of significant choices and has thus been not only authoritarian and undemocratic but also un-American. In a democratic society options should be available in education as in all other aspects of society. Not that diversity is automatically good, but that its opposite, uniformity, is so bad."

An alternative schools program directly expands citizens' decision making. "Making every parent the decision maker for his family's education is a significant stage beyond electing representatives to decide what kind of education makes the most sense for the majority in the locality," Mario Fantini said.

While alternative schools promote much greater community involvement in education--a worthy objective in iteself--they need not create more controversy and conflict. Having a choice between types of schools tends to minimize conflict among interest groups, Fantini said, "because each individual is making direct decisions in educational affairs." Students and parents find it harder to blame the schools when they choose them.

With alternatives comes competition--regarded as essential to the American free enterprise ecomony--but limited largely to varsity sports when it comes to relations between public schools. "What is most important in understanding the ability of the educational establishment to resist change is the fact that public school systems are protected public monopolies with only minimal competition from private and parochial schools," Kenneth B. Clark observed in High School 1980. "If there are no alternatives to the present system--short of present private and parochial schools which are approaching their limit of expansion--then the possibilities of improvement in public education are limited," Clark said.

Clark proposed as alternative forms of public education the development of:

- Regional state schools.
- Federal regional schools.
- University-related open schools.
- Industrial demonstration schools.
- Schools sponsored by labor unions.
- Army schools.

"American industrial and material wealth was made possible through industrial competition," Clark said. "American educational health may be made possible through educational competition."

Competition is also seen as an invigorating change for public schools by S. Michael Miller and Pamela Roby of New York U. "With any form of competitive, publicly supported education, teachers and schools would have to improve in order to keep their students, for their students would have an alternative, a choice such as is currently available only to families that can afford to send children to parochial and private schools," they said.

Competition and the supply-and-demand effect it has on schools provide a means for institutional self-renewal, something lacking in many of today's

monolithic school systems, proponents of alternative schools say. If an alternative program succeeds in educating students, it increases in popularity, thereby promoting its own expansion or the initiation of other alternatives. If the program fails to teach the children, it falls out of favor with educational consumers--the students and parents--and they go shopping for another kind of school.

Proponents of alternative schools argue that no one has a monoply on educational wisdom and that not all children benefit most from one type of school. They agree with Charles E. Silberman's conclusion in Crisis in the Classroom: "There is, and can be, no one curriculum suitable for all time, or for all students at a given time." Silberman added, "To insist that there is only one curriculum is to confuse the means of education with the end."

Whatever the value of competition and diversity, the critics say, alternative schools raise threats to a democratic society. They contend that alternative schools tend to segment and divide our society, while the typical

One Man's View

Albert Shanker, president of the United Federation of Teachers, views the alternative school as a supplement to the regular school program.

"There can be no question that these schools are performing a valuable service for many students--those who would not be in school at all if not for the availability of such programs and those who, for one reason or another, had not profited from the traditional programs. But it is unfortunate that the effectiveness of the alternate schools in a limited educational area is now being used so unfairly to fuel condemnation of the regular schools.

"Critics assert that students and teachers in the alternative schools are happier, that the programs are more varied and innovative, that there is greater use of community resources, that hordes of teachers and students are clamoring to participate in the program, that these schools have lower dropout and truancy rates, etc.

"The way some critics look at it, the alternative schools, by their demonstration of creativity in their circumscribed function, constitute a sweeping repudiation of the traditional bureaucratic school structure and program.

"The rationale of such criticism is defective because it ignores the clearly defined raison d'etre of the alternative school, which is to serve the special needs of a certain segment of the student population. Far from being a full-blown alternative to the regular school it merely offers an improvisational and, in many instances, last-resort alternative program to those students who had failed to respond to conventional schooling. This type of program is a supplement to rather than a replacement for the regular program," Shanker concluded.

comprehensive high school serves as a social "melting pot." They may cite James B. Conant who, in High School 1980, wrote, "The social arguments in favor of a comprehensive high school are, today, at least as important as the educational...a widely comprehensive high school can be an effective instrument for furthering unity and democracy in an entire community."

The advocates of alternative schools, on the other hand, say the "melting pot" has never really worked in our pluralistic nation composed of widely diverse groups of people and that whatever blending has occurred has often been at the expense of minority groups. They say differences should be appreciated, not destroyed in the name of uniformity.

In a proposal for experimental alternative schools submitted to the U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, the Berkeley school district charged that "the public school has served as a sifting and sorting mechanism. It is a middle-class institution. It embodies middle-class culture and thereby automatically serves the middle-class child...the school preserves the stratification system by limiting 'upward mobility' to those who are willing and able to play within the rules of the game or, more specifically, to acquire the value orientations and motivations appropriate to middle-class membership. In so doing, education has fulfilled the expectations of a 'racist' society and has itself become a racist institution."

But the critics ask, what is the difference between a racially exclusive all-black school in Berkeley and a segregated all-white school in the South? Aren't segregated schools dangerous for the society wherever they are found and whatever the motivation behind them?

Thoughtful supporters of the alternative school concept recognize the inherent threat that educational options may be seized upon by segregationists as a means to subvert equal educational opportunity. This is why most insist that admission to an alternative school be limited only by the school's size, its ability to meet a student's needs and, possibly, by its desire for a representative student body.

To Each His Own

"Different people need education of different forms as well as different content. They learn best in different ways, within different structures of the educational institution," the NEA Task Force on Compulsory Education said in a June 1972 report. "Everyone, however, needs the guarantee that the school will offer him the kind of education he needs to carry out his plans.... The Task Force concludes, therefore, that it is compulsory--to the welfare of the nation and its people--that every student have actual access to a variety of structures and curriculums.... We conclude further that age must be no barrier to entering and reentering the educational system....

"As society's needs have come to change so rapidly there has also come the need for a much wider variety of alternatives for securing the required education; and many of these alternatives will need to be pursued in ways other than those by which most schools presently operate."

THE PRESSURE FOR ALTERNATIVES

> The system of public education in Seattle, Wash.--indeed in any city today--does reasonably well what it was designed to do, namely, to provide an educational program aimed at meeting the needs of the majority of its students. However, it does not do well what it was not designed in the first place to do; that is, to confront effectively the wide variety of needs of students who are outside the norm. The alternative education programs in Seattle public schools have grown up in response to these students and their needs and are a frank recognition on the part of the district that the regular school program is not the only answer.
>
> --Mike Hickey, Director
> Seattle Alternative Education Task Force

The best hope for alternative public schools is the urgent need of school systems that are failing to educate and inspire many students. As realization of these failures sinks in, pessimism spreads--among students turned off by their school, among parents upset enough to found their own often feeble "free schools," among taxpayers troubled that the rising costs of education aren't matched by results and among thoughtful school professionals seeking better answers.

While the nation has never been fully satisfied with its schools, discouragement about the possibility of doing anything basic to improve things is much greater now than a decade ago. A. Harry Passow of Columbia U.'s Teachers College has written, "In the early 1960s, as the civil rights movement and the war on poverty gathered momentum and as the post-Sputnik concern for skilled manpower highlighted the inadequate development of talent among minority groups, Congress was on the threshhold of new social legislation and one could be optimistic, despite the apparent complexities of the problems. Since then, having spent billions of dollars on compensatory education, initiated thousands of projects, completed hundreds of studies of uneven significance and even more disparate quality, entered numerous judicial decisions and rulings, experienced dozens of riots and disorders, and generated whole new agencies and educational institutions, the nation's urban schools continue to operate in a vortex of segregation, alienation and declining achievement."

While the failures of traditionally organized schools are most obvious in the larger cities, they are hardly limited to them. After visiting more

than 250 first-grade and kindergarten classrooms in 100 schools in 13 states, John I. Goodlad, dean of the UCLA Graduate School of Education, reported, "We were unable to discern much attention to pupil needs, attainments or problems as a basis for individual opportunities to learn.... Teaching was predominantly telling and questioning by the teacher, with children responding one by one or occasionally in chorus. ...The textbook was the most highly visible instrument of learning and teaching.... Rarely did we find small groups intensely in pursuit of knowledge; rarely did we find individual pupils at work in self-sustaining inquiry...we are forced to conclude that much of the so-called educational reform movement has been blunted on the classroom door."

Unruly Students' Actions Are a Reaction

It's a rare public high school in which the assistant principals, if not the principal himself, don't spend much of their time trying to maintain discipline by constantly roaming the halls, checking the lavatories and, generally, threatening the students with stern words and glances.

Why? Are youngsters inherently disruptive? Or, are they trying to tell school administrators something? Samuel B. Gould, chairman of the Education Testing Service's (ETS) Commission on Nontraditional Study, said "the typical student finds himself swept into a great collective system that makes him feel puny and of no account, slavishly gathering course hours...according to standard patterns that brook no exceptions. And so he shows his rebelliousness in every way he can--in his dress, his speech, his life style, his contempt for his elders and his repudiation of everything traditional."

Harold Howe, II, former U.S. commissioner of education, said part of the problem "is that we tend to think of secondary school as a sorting-out operation. We see our job as primarily identifying the probable successful students--and not nearly enough as helping the probable failures. Is it any wonder that...students who know or have been convinced that they are slated for failure, rebel? From the minute they enter the high school they feel diminished; they feel confined by an institution that is not a friend." Howe added: "Youngsters--particularly adolescents--must feel that the school does not submerge their personal identities. They must feel that someone knows their name. Yet in some high schools of 3,000 to 5,000 students, this is now impossible. A student may attend classes for years and get virtually no personal recognition until graduation day when someone mispronounces his name."

While James B. Conant and others have long argued the advantage of large comprehensive high schools that are more "efficient" because they can provide a wider spectrum of course offerings, little has been said about the inefficiency of bigness. But bigness and the impersonality and inflexibility that come with it, have much to do with student unrest. Big schools are most often in big cities and often have the biggest problems. "In the name of efficiency, consistency and equal treatment, the school in the urban area finds itself as part of a bureaucracy in fact or by association," according to Samuel M. Brownell, former U.S. commissioner of education. "The larger it becomes as a school, the greater are the pressures...to become bureaucratic, so that organizational processes determine decisions and relationships rather than judicious consideration of what may be most desirable for the individuals involved."

Elementary schools are smaller and often less impersonal than secondary schools, but they can be even more straight-laced and demanding of conformity. For example, one elementary school requires its students not to speak above a whisper while eating lunch in the cafeteria. Charles Silberman reasoned: "Because adolescents are harder to 'control' than younger children, secondary schools tend to be even more authoritarian...than elementary schools."

In The Student as Nigger, Jerry Farber observed, "It's not what you're taught that does the harm but how you're taught. Our schools teach you by pushing you around, by stealing your will and your sense of power, by making timid, apathetic slaves of you--authority addicts." School officials may be ready at this point to shout back that it's not all that bad, that many students are learning, and are as free and as happy as could be expected--that the picture has been painted too dark. It would be foolish to contend that there aren't many successes as well as many failures.

But, when is a school failing? Only when a majority of its students are failing in one way or another? Or, doesn't it fail to the extent that any student fails? Although Mario Fantini estimates that 60% of public school students are satisfied with what they are getting, he says the problem is "that critical mass of dissatisfied customers ranging anywhere from 35% to 40% to even 60% in some areas, who are converging on the schools and saying it is not working for them. Since the public schools are supposed to be serving their interest...they are expecting something more from the schools, even demanding it. We have people wanting to keep the schools just as they are and some who want to move in new directions. So, the question comes down to this: How do we deal with diversified demands on a single system of public education?"

No Chance To Choose

The public school often is about the only institution in a community that doesn't allow for choice. A person selects his doctor, his church, his house and his spouse, but unless he sends his child to a private school, the child automatically will go to the public school to which he is assigned, to the classroom to which he is assigned, and to the desk to which he is assigned. Of course, many parents consider carefully what a school's reputation and clientele are before moving into a community served by it. But the differences in similarly organized public schools are often more a matter of image and status than of the substance of their curriculum. Most school systems, in effect, tell their consumer-supporters, "Take it or leave it."

In 19th century and early 20th century America, quitting school and going to work was a legitimate option--one used by millions of persons as a practical way to get on-the-job training and "get ahead." That avenue is a dead-end street today because our complicated, impersonal society usually demands a job applicant to show a high school diploma before he will be considered for anything but a low-paying job. So, alternative public schools aren't really seeking to do something so new, advocates say. Instead, they are seeking to preserve options that were available in earlier, less formal eras.

It should be noted that the option inherent in alternative schools is not just for students or parents--but for teachers, too. Just as different stu-

dents do better in different types of schools, different teachers may teach better in various kinds of schools. An alternative school system helps to satisfy teachers who prefer one approach and provide for the self-renewal of others who want to try teaching in a different learning environment while retaining job security. The subdividing of a big, bureaucratic high school into several smaller alternatives either within or outside the main building is also a way to fight hardening of the bureaucratic arteries.

Where Now?

In our changing society, one might expect that the public schools will evolve, experiment and develop in new, stimulating ways. However, many are not hopeful. Anthony C. Oettinger of Harvard U. has predicted that "10 years or so from now the schools will be pretty much as they are today." He added in High School 1980, "Most of the school buildings that will be in use in 1980 are in use today. Most of the teachers who will be teaching in 1980 are teaching today."

Others sense that pressures on school systems are making them move. "We are entering a new era of school reform," says Alvin C. Eurich, president of the Academy for Educational Development. "Concern with the academic quality of the curriculum is giving way to the fear that the curriculum simply is not relevant as it stands. School reorganization is still an issue, but the emphasis has shifted from efficiency to assuring that the schools do not actually thwart learning."

Recognizing the explosive frustrations of many with the public schools, ETS's Gould believes we are witnessing "the birth of the tradition of being nontraditional, of moving away from the norm, of prizing individuality and independence above all else." But Gould cautioned, "We must see to it that this trend is accompanied by due regard to past achievement that still has relevance.... What the American people need in education today is not a cutting back or a wiping out but an adding to. Our new system, however it may be devised, must be based on individual choice of goals and individualized progress toward these goals...."

The Voucher Plan: Doomed to Failure?

The proposal to provide parents with vouchers enabling them to send their children to the school of their choice would, even if widely accepted, face many hurdles in being established within a state. A voucher plan would certainly complement an alternative school system, but alternative public schools do not require vouchers. Since all children are entitled to attend public school, the problem is not in the payment, but in providing the choice. One of the faults of voucher proposals has been that they don't assure options. It is no good to give parents vouchers to choose schools for their children if all the schools are essentially the same. "The voucher system is probably doomed because it lacks options," according to Daniel J. Burke of Indiana U.'s School of Education.

Free Schools—A Spur for Alternatives?

In contrast to alternative schools that operate within the public school system, hundreds of nonpublic, independent alternative or "free" schools, as they are often called, have been started by people alienated or disenchanted with public schools. They are skeptical that genuine alternatives can be sustained within a public school system. In his book Free Schools, Jonathon Kozol, who has been both a teacher and organizer of free schools says "no matter how...inventive 'alternatives within the system' may contrive to be, they...must continue to provide within a single package custodial functions, indoctrinal functions, credentializing, labeling and grading services, along with the more purely educational functions." Kozol added: "The school that flies the flag is...accountable to that flag and to the values it represents."

To free school supporters, the word "free" means much more than merely student freedom. It indicates that every free school is free to offer the schooling it chooses. "In the most interesting free schools, there are three dominant ideas, of which public schools are likely to borrow only one," John W. Donohue, associate editor of America, said. "For though they (the public schools) can utilize the pedagogy of freedom, they resent and resist parental control, and as government-sponsored institutions, they're not likely to even think of reforming the social order," Donohue added.

While some estimates place the number of free schools that have been started in the country at more than 2,000, a New Schools Directory estimates that in 1972 there were only 400 to 500 free schools. Few have more than a couple of hundred students and many have less than 50. The New Schools Exchange, a periodical for free school people, noted that "the average life expectancy of a new (or free) school is only 18 months." Kozol disagreed with that figure. He said the average length of time most free schools have operated is nine months.

Free schools are frequently plagued with problems. Some of the schools start with the boost of a foundation grant or initial burst of contributions but never develop sustaining income. Legal hurdles frequently confront free schools that may seek to utilize an old house or store as a school building, or to use uncertified teachers, or not to include state-required courses. Free schools also have often run afoul of personnel problems that occur when it is never made clear where the final authority rests, or when one ot two people who have carried the young school forward lose interest. Finally, the same failures in teaching the three R's that have caused many people to turn away from public schools have been a faltering point for free schools.

While part of the inspiration for alternative public schools may have come from the free schools' proliferation, perhaps more of the incentive lately for alternatives has resulted from free schools' failures, some observers say. Many people have concluded that the best hope for viable options lies in new schools within the system, not outside it.

SCHOOLS WITHOUT WALLS

> It is quite possible that the high school in 1980 will not be a place, but rather it will be a growth period and a social condition. The students designated as high school students will have the whole of the city for a classroom.

That forecast by Frank G. Jennings of Teachers College, Columbia U., is already a reality for students in Philadelphia's Parkway Program, which opened in February 1969 with 143 randomly chosen students. The students first met John Bremer, Parkway's original director, and his staff in a converted second floor loft of an old bank building several blocks from the city's one and one-half mile long Benjamin Franklin Parkway, along which many of the city's prominent cultural and business institutions are located.

The Parkway students, whose names were drawn from over 2,200 applications, represented a cross section of the school population, with IQ's ranging from 74 to 150 and the student body being 52% white and 48% black. Suburban students attended on an exchange basis. Currently the school's population is made up of 45% white students and 55% black students.

Parkway's appeal is in its basic characteristic: freedom from the limits of any one building. There are no school buildings or classrooms as such. Instead, courses are offered all around the city--in churches, corporate offices, cultural institutions or out in the community. The openness of the Parkway program--it doesn't like to be called a school--extends to the lack of formal discipline or dress codes and of grades. Students help hire and evaluate teachers and aid in curriculum planning. Students and teachers are organized into small, personal units--named "Alpha," "Beta" and "Gamma"--each with its own separate headquarters, course offerings and town meetings. A fourth unit, "Delta," was formed in 1971 and operates in a semi-residential section of Philadelphia testing the hypothesis that a Parkway unit could operate without the resources of the Parkway.

During a typical day, a student might spend from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at a local business or museum, either on his own or as part of a group led by a teacher. After lunch, with a "management group" of other students where Parkway programs and plans are often discussed, he may spend two hours in one of eight tutorial units where he studies the normal state-required subjects. From 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. he might visit another Parkway institution where he is learning while doing. The basic skill courses include many standbys, but also include subjects such as "Computers," "Contemporary Black Writers" and "Mathe-

matics for Science." The less traditional courses range from "Go Fly a Kite" to "Market Research" to "How City Planning Works." Parkway has little in the way of interscholastic sports, but the busy students don't seem to miss them. "We do have swimming, hiking and intramural basketball," said one student.

The program makes use of space provided by more than a dozen churches and synagogues, avoiding church-state-separation strictures because the courses are conducted in the churches, but not by them. While some courses are taught by volunteers in the varied Parkway institutions, more are conducted by the program's teachers making use of the institutional resources.

At Parkway's first commencement, Bremer stressed a bit of the program's philosophy: "There are a million ways to learn, a million ways to teach. Those who say 'this is the way,' 'this is the orthodoxy' are bound to fail...." The commencement concluded with a series of unrehearsed testimonials. One mother tearfully thanked Parkway for rekindling her son's enthusiasm. "You saved his life," she said. A teacher said he had been turned-on by the program. "No one thinks of teachers who drop out of the system, but they do, either literally or figuratively, just like the students," he said. While some students, especially at the outset, have had a tendency to goof off, a 16-year-old junior noted that Parkway has far fewer disciplinary problems than most schools. "There is no incentive to beat the Parkway system because the educational system is not trying to beat us. We are the system."

Problems between Bremer and the superintendent led to Bremer's sudden resignation in June 1970. But Parkway has not only continued; it has been expanded. Under the second director of the program, Leonard B. Finkelstein, Parkway has expanded to include 800 students. This, despite frequent attacks by politicians on the program's "hippies" and unorthodoxy. One fact the financially pressed city's most conservative officials appreciate is that Parkway actually costs the city less than a traditionally organized high school.

Questions Asked

After visiting Parkway during its first semester, Charles E. Silberman raised some questions about the program in Crisis in the Classroom. Silberman noted that the school itself calls the Parkway institutions "unique" because of "the unparalleled wealth of material and human resources which they bring to a very small area of the city." He asked how other school systems could match them. However, a Parkway teacher has noted that the schools without walls can be adapted by many communities if "you just get in your car and drive around with your eyes open and then envision how each local facility that you pass on the road might be transformed and utilized for your own educational purposes."

Silberman also asked whether there might not be a limit to the number of high school students that business and cultural institutions will be willing to absorb once the novelty wears off. While there undoubtedly is a maximum number any establishment can serve at one time, the number of potential participating institutions in even a small city is far more than most schoolmen have ever permitted themselves to imagine. In Parkway's first years, only one participating institution dropped out, after some thefts occurred.

Silberman criticized "a certain intellectual flabbiness in a great many of the courses being offered during the first semester" at Parkway. However, the percentage of students attending college from Parkway, who represent a true cross section of Philadelphia students because they are chosen by lottery, has been somewhat higher than the citywide average.

The Meaning of Parkway

"The school-without-walls concept has successfully broken the iron grip of the assembly-line learning routine that has undermined the educational process," Donald William Cox concluded in his book on Parkway, The City as a Schoolhouse. "The free-swinging Parkway program presents a sharp contrast to...modern museums of mindlessness and is already serving as a contemporary beacon for the new learning of tomorrow that will accentuate the attributes of the human spirit that are missing in today's academic factories," Cox said.

Although no grades are given, formal evaluations of students occur three times a year and students and teachers prepare narrative documents written for each course. The average attendance at Parkway is 89% compared with 75% to 80% in other Philadelphia high schools, although the school day runs to 5 p.m. The dropout rate hardly exists at Parkway, while it is as high as 35% at some regular Philadelphia high schools. A student who had missed 110 days while at another school the year before, said, "I even fought my mother to come here on bad weather days when it was sleeting or snowing because I knew I wasn't just going to hear a teacher go 'blah, blah, blah' from 9 to 3."

To many, a basic benefit of the Parkway program has been the fact that it has been fully integrated from the start and has served as a means to better racial understanding, unlike many other de facto segregated high schools both in the surrounding suburbs and inner city.

"The significant thing here is that while other cities are still talking about reforms in education, they are a reality at Parkway," the late James E. Allen, U.S. commissioner of education, said at the school's first commencement. Allen then added, "To many observers, this young program is the most exciting and probably the most significant innovation going on in American education today."

The Concept Spreads

Schools without walls have been started or are being planned in a growing number of other cities. Among them are:

Chicago: "The Metro School" opened in February 1970 with 150 randomly chosen students from 1,000 applicants throughout the city. It was expanded to 350 students the next semester. Fifty-six businesses and cultural and community organizations provided staff, money, equipment and space for the program which offered 86 different courses during the first semester, none in a regular school building. Courses included "How a Lawyer Works," "Learning Spanish in the

Community," "Drafting at Illinois Bell," "Movie Making and Social Change," "Architecture and Civilization," and "What Is a Constitution?" After a semester, the school's organizers found that almost all students had found at least one area in which they ecame interested and worked hard. Most students showed marked progress in basic reading skills and seemed to have much more positive attitudes about themselves, their teachers and other students, particularly those of another race.

Boston: A "flexible campus" program was started in the fall of 1971 for juniors and seniors at 12 of the city's 18 high schools. Though students continue to attend their regular schools for at least part of the day, they may choose part-time study at universities, work in businesses or take elective minicourses in their own schools, which vary in degree of participation. "The flexible campus is an alternative; some students may want it and some not," said Marion J. Fahey, associate school superintendent. Initiation of the "flexible campus" program was promoted by a report on violence in regular schools that said many students felt their studies were irrelevent. The program also seeks to carry the "open school" concept above the elementary level to meet the needs of incoming high school students who have already developed independent study habits.

New York City: A "City as School" opened in September 1972 with 100 students. Various "activity and learning" units included companies, institutes and agencies such as IBM, the Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Museum and Brooklyn Academy of Arts and Sciences. Fifteen high school students joined with school administrators in the planning.

In November 1971 New York City opened the Downtown Academies with 32 students. Fifteen months later the enrollment was up to 240 volunteer students in the program, which combines academic studies with on-the-job training in nearby offices or large corporations. The academies provide alternative weeks of study and on-the-job training, with the students paid for the work. Companies agree to hire graduates for full-time employment.

Madison, Wis.: A "School Without Walls" opened in September 1972 with 105 high school students chosen by lottery. In addition to the regular teaching staff and volunteers, each parent is required to spend at least two hours a month in school-assisting work or teaching. Students establish their individual objectives through written contracts and no grades are given.

MINI-SCHOOLS

> Large schools have very large problems. Small schools have smaller ones, and these can generally be solved. You can get your hands on them. With 150 kids, you can get to know everybody by the week's end.
>
> --Louis McCagg, Director
> New York Urban Coalition's
> High School Project

"Urban high schools are inevitably big," Samuel Brownell wrote in 1970. Some educators have begun to challenge that assumption and to point out that some of the biggest schools are among the worst.

In The American High School Today, James B. Conant urged the value of the large, comprehensive high school and the need to close small, inefficient secondary schools of less than 400 students that could not offer the range of courses provided in a larger school. Others argue that while schools can be too small, they also can be too big. In New York City, where the problem of bigness is perhaps greatest, most high schools have more than 3,000 students and some have more than 5,000.

To end the anonymity, Harold Howe suggested in High School 1980 that "large high schools be subdivided into small units with particular areas of the building (perhaps even 'common rooms'), faculty members, and counselors, student government, social affairs, subprincipal, etc., associated with each one."

Such school-within-a-school organization is not new. For example, Evanston Township (Ill.) High School has been subdivided into four semi-independent schools, each with its own identity, student body of 1,200, faculty and physical facilities. Newton (Mass.) High School has seven "houses," each with about 400 students--who form a cross section of the total school population--about 30 teachers and its own administration.

But usually such school-within-a-school subdivisions provide only a partial breakdown of the institutional bigness and impersonality. Students generally are free to take courses outside of their particular subdivision, which often seems to have been created more for administrative convenience than because it is the size of school the students need and want.

Of course, there are arguments for big schools. How many small schools can offer Chinese or marine science or computer programming? But people seem

to be increasingly realizing that very real losses in personality, harmony and civility are combined with the efficiencies made possible through bigness. Jonathon Kozol contended in Free Schools that the best, most humane schools should not have more than 80 to 100 children. "The most gentle and least manipulative of people often prove to be intolerable 'operators' once they are faced with something like 2,000 children and 4,000 angry parents," Kozol said.

One answer to the behemoth school is the mini-school. Instead of having 4,000 students and 160 teachers, most of whom don't know each other, why not try 20 mini-schools, each with only 200 students, eight teachers and perhaps some volunteer aides, all familiar to each other, ask proponents of mini-schools. In the 1960's a lot of talk evolved around developing "educational parks" that would enable several secondary schools and a few elementary schools to share the same campus, swimming pool and what were seen as great values to be obtained from such a massive collection of students. But there is not much discussion of educational parks these days. People have found quite a bit missing from the big schools they already have and would like to scale them down to more humane dimensions.

Mini-schools are more often found at the secondary level, where schools traditionally have been larger. But elementary mini-schools can be created in the same building by dividing the entire school into separate K-6 units, perhaps one with an open educational style and one with a traditional approach.

On the secondary level, the important feeling of identity can best be promoted if a mini-school is housed in its own building. However, the true test of a mini-school is not its location, which may be in the same building with other mini-schools, but whether it is administratively independent.

A Big City's Small Schools

New York City has more than 1 million public school students, which is more pupils than some states have residents. The problems of bigness are as great or greater there than in any school system. One response recently has been the development of a variety of different mini-schools. A dozen were opened in September 1971. Most average between 100 and 125 students, so their numerical impact on the New York City school system has been small. But the fact that the mini-schools have attracted more attention than their size would seem to merit indicates real interest in developing alternatives to the massive impersonality common to many bigger schools. New York City's mini-schools have had varying success so far and are generally still too new for final conclusions to be reached. But Henry J. Brun, coordinator of the mini-school program, said, "Our new approaches are working for us and we will try almost anything that works."

New York City's mini-schools average less than 25 students per teacher, better than the citywide average. They have been started without any major federal grants, except for $170,000 to establish reading laboratories in 10 schools. There have been problems in leasing private property for the schools because of the multiagency leasing process required by city regulations. While students, parents and teachers tended to be cautious at first, many have developed genuine enthusiasm for their particular mini-school. Looking at the

total program, Brun said, "It's an attempt to develop extremely flexible and humanitarian studies for students who need something different. Kids who may have dropped out are now involved in school and highly interested."

Wingate Prep

Its name could be that of a fashionable New England boarding school with a handsome green campus and scores of wealthy, old alumni. But Wingate Prep is something quite different. A satellite of George W. Wingate High School in Brooklyn, it is located in a former warehouse. The school, specifically intended for students who can't function in large, impersonal schools, opened in 1970 with 40 youngsters, had 80 in 1971 and 120 in September 1972. More than 90% are black and the rest are Puerto Rican, with one-third being girls.

Wingate's office walls are painted bright, attractive colors, and a series of dividers create classroom clusters within the vast warehouse. The lounge where students gather to relax and rap is made comfortable with old couches and chairs, magazine racks and bookcases.

There is a waiting list of students who would like to go to Wingate. While the students are high risks academically, Wingate won't accept dope addicts or anyone with a criminal record.

Wingate Prep is partly funded by Pfizer, Inc., and the Urban Coalition. It is officially considered a satellite school rather than an alternative school because New York City's alternative schools are fully funded by the school system. Absenteeism and truancy are a problem, but not as much as at the main high school. Wingate's students clearly have developed an esprit de corps and a feeling for school that most never had before. While the demands on the small teaching staff are heavy, only one teacher has left. Parents have been deeply involved in getting the school started, many looking upon Wingate Prep as a "last chance" for their dropout-prone kids. One New York City school official called Wingate Prep "one of our most successful programs."

The Irving Place Academy

The Irving Place Academy is an all-girl mini-school that opened in September 1971 as a branch of Washington Irving High School in New York City. Its students come from throughout the city, usually having been referred by school advisors. When the academy opened, it had 120 high-risk 9th- and 10th-grade students. By the end of the year, one-third had left for various reasons, but most of those who stayed are enthusiastic, whereas most were antagonistic and unsure in the beginning.

The academy has an individualized program fitted into a shortened day (from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.) and short class periods tailored for students' short attention spans. The teachers often serve as counselors stepping in to help a girl with out-of-class problems. School director Bret Schlesinger said one of the school's chief assets is "the small, community-group structure which helps eliminate alienation. The teachers have established a rapport with the kids and have begun to create an atmosphere in which students can learn."

Planning for the school didn't start until four months before it opened, which left a lot of things undone, but meant the school was under way before any opposition had formed. Schlesinger said the teachers suffered from lack of preparation. He added, "They were constantly having to do with new situations and new problems, but there was no real way to prepare them for this." While the teachers' original enthusiasm was followed by fits of discouragement, almost all decided to accept the challenge for another year.

The school has no funding except from the school system. It has a 9 to 1 student-teacher ratio. Originally, the plan was for girls to attend for only one year, but now an 11th grade is being added and a diploma program is planned. At first, most of the students were black, but now more whites are attending.

Whatever the Name, It's Still an Alternative

They may be called mini-schools, satellite academies, internship programs or sub-schools, but each of the following provides an alternative for some New York City students.

- Students at the mini-school in Julia Richman High School in Manhattan have helped devise their own curriculum, and employes of a large oil company nearby have done volunteer teaching.

- Two New York Plaza Academy, named for its address, has gotten started in a skyscraper near the tip of Manhattan as a school for students who spend one week in school and the next week working in neighboring banks, brokerage houses and insurance companies.

- In the Bronx, another academy is collaborating with Lincoln Hospital to give practical training in health care fields.

- Haaren High School, where "Up the Down Staircase" was filmed, has been entirely subdivided into 14 semiautonomous mini-schools of 150 students and about a dozen teachers, each organized around a particular theme such as aviation or urban affairs. Haaren, long known as a tough, troubled high school, still has problems, but there's been new hope.

ELEMENTARY ALTERNATIVES

Since learning ability generally declines as people grow older, a strong case can be made that secondary schools should be secondary to elementary schools in any proposal for educational reform. However, the alternative school movement has been taking place mainly at the secondary level. Two reasons are offered for this development: A school system's failures are more obvious at the secondary level, and elementary students usually don't rebel however bad their schools.

The alternative school philosophy is not limited to a particular age group. School systems that appreciate the value of options for older students soon recognize their merits for younger children. Of course, the options won't be the same. In high school, they may be specifically between auto mechanics and art, while in elementary school, the choices are more general, encompassing the entire approach to education.

There are various ways to provide elementary students with alternatives. One is simply to offer a different program at a school and permit students from throughout the system to attend there instead of at their neighborhood schools. Another is to pair schools, possibly with one organized in an "open" fashion and one traditionally, with parents able to choose. A third means is by subdividing within a single school and offering different approaches--such as team-teaching, an open school and a traditional school--in the same building.

Four Choices in Minneapolis

Minneapolis' Southeast area is in many ways a microcosm of the entire city. Bounded by the Mississippi River that separates Minneapolis and St. Paul, the Southeast area contains a great mixture of activities and people. There is the U. of Minnesota's main campus along with factories, railroad yards and flour mills. Impressive private homes stand a block away from a housing project. The 30,000 residents of the Southeast community include unskilled workers and tenured professors, some of the city's first families and some of its poorest. Of the 2,300 students enrolled in the Southeast schools, 10.5% are black or members of other minority groups, which is slightly less than the citywide average.

The differences in attitudes and life styles that one would expect to find in a large city exist in the Southeast area, which was a prime reason why it has become the site of an alternative school program funded by the U.S. Office of Education.

Minneapolis' Southeast Alternatives Program serves all public school students in the area, with plans to open admissions to students from other parts of the city during the 1972-73 school year. An elementary student may attend any of the four elementary schools in the Southeast area. They are:

- A contemporary school, Tuttle, which offers curriculum innovations, but maintains a teacher-directed, structured curriculum and grade-level school organization.

- A continuous progress school, a part of Pratt and Motley schools, in which each child advances at his own pace without regard to grade level and in which instruction is team-taught and based on a carefully sequenced curriculum in basic skills.

- An open school, Marcy, which combines flexible curriculum, scheduling and age grouping in the style of the British infant schools. Children take a great deal of initiative for their own education with the emphasis on pursuing their own interests.

- A free school, named the Minneapolis Free School, which extends through the 12th-grade level. Students, parents, volunteers and faculty develop the courses, and much off-campus experience is included. The initial enrollment of 70 students will be expanded to 150 during 1972-73 and a more structured, content-oriented program will be developed, according to school officials.

The four alternative schools, started in the 1971-72 school year, expect to receive federal funding for four more years before being financed entirely by the Minneapolis school system. Each school's program will be evaluated against its own goals and objectives.

Each of the four elementary schools has received the strong, excited support of students, teachers, parents and school officials. One official said, "The alternatives really have worked, and there has been a large amount of community involvement." The schools' teaching staffs are not confined to certified personnel but include U. of Minnesota students and professors, adult volunteers, teacher aides and students teaching students.

The rationale for the entire Southeast Alternatives Program is one of offering meaningful alternatives to students, faculty and parents. Thus, one parent gave her impression of the program at Tuttle: "I am convinced my choice to send my first grader to Tuttle was the best for him. I am not recommending it without reservation for everyone by any means. I am saying that Tuttle deserves to be considered as the honest alternative it is."

One problem that has developed with the Southeast Alternatives Program is maintaining good communication between the diverse schools. A big benefit has been the liberated feeling that has come to many students, teachers and parents through their increased responsibility for choice making. The Southeast Alternatives Program also includes a wide-ranging secondary program at Marshall-University High School. Throughout, the Southeast program remains "committed to providing for and encouraging the development of individual differences found in the highly diverse population the schools serve.

Elementary School Alternatives Elsewhere

While, nationally, there has been more demand for alternative schools at the secondary level, school systems increasingly have started to offer options for younger students, too. Thus far, they usually have been on less than a systemwide basis, but have a much greater potential impact.

St. Paul, Minn.: The district started a "Learning Centers Program" for 4th- to 12th-grade students during the 1971-72 school year both as a means of offering more individualized instruction and of promoting racial desegregation.

The elementary program enrolled students from seven neighborhood schools at five learning centers with these differing emphases: foreign languages--students considered different cultures and languages and could concentrate on Spanish; career exploration and development--industrial arts and home economics courses were offered and students ran a store and office; environmental inquiry--students learned about ecology from first-hand work with plants and animals and were introduced to a variety of scientific subjects; aesthetic environment--students could work in ceramics, painting, print making, sculpture or crafts; social environment--students studied different cultural groups and current social issues.

Courses were offered in nine-week cycles on a voluntary basis, with a student attending his learning center for one-half day every third day. Free bus transportation was provided. One result of the program was considerably more mixing of students of different races and backgrounds than occurred at the neighborhood schools.

Jefferson County, Colo.: Two "open living" elementary schools are now operating in response to recommendations from parents. The two schools are in different parts of the district but are open to any elementary student. They have a total enrollment of 275. The schools are "free to create a curriculum not bound by the content, emphasis or measuring devices which characterize the conventional curriculum." They stress self-confidence, self-reliance and self-discipline.

Mankato, Minn.: The highly innovative Wilson Campus School, which is operated by Mankato State College, is open to any of the city's public school students. The school's 540 students range from prekindergarten to 12th-grade level, but there are no grade levels or grades. Each student works at his own pace on his own program. Traditional classes and school schedule also have been discarded, with the school open year round, and students free to come and go as they wish.

Berkeley, Calif.: The district makes use of a wide variety of alternative schools, including Jefferson Elementary, a K-3 school that offers three courses of study: traditional (149 students), individualized (217 students) and multicultural

(234 students). The multicultural course is bilingual, with students learning in Spanish or Chinese at the same time they are learning in English. Students in this course study Indian, Asian, Chicano, black and European cultures and themselves comprise a broad racial and cultural mix. The multicultural course began with the school's lowest enrollment and now has the highest.

Pittsburgh, Pa.: East Hills Elementary School, the first new elementary school opened in the city in eight years, includes a day care center and a special education center in addition to grades K-8. The school's innovative programs and open space architecture were well publicized to the predominantly black community which the school serves as a neighborhood school and to white parents in other parts of the city who were asked if they wanted their children to be bused to the school. The school was originally planned to include grades K-5 only; accordingly, only white parents of K-5 students were contacted. Of 600 students in those grades, 36% are white. Grades 6, 7 and 8 were added to the school as a "temporary measure" and a racial mix was not attempted. Of the 150 students in those grades, 97% are black.

Teachers were especially recruited for the new school, and were chosen according to their ability to adjust to the open space concept or their previous experience in such a setting. The average age of the 36 teachers is 25 years. Instruction is individualized, and students proceed at their own rate of speed. In addition, students in grades 6-8 who choose the occupational, vocational, technical (OVT) option leave East Hills to attent OVT classes at the nearby Washington Educational Center. There, girls and boys may take courses such as carpentry, woodwork, electronic welding, cooking and sewing. One school district spokesman noted that students were easily accepting and adapting to the East Hills school, and the teachers were "very enthusiastic."

SCHOOLS FOR DROPOUTS

When students decide to drop out of school, they are selecting an alternative available to them upon reaching age 16. It often is not much of a choice, merely going from failure in school to failure on the street. Which is why many dropouts will quickly grasp the "second chance" offered by a dropout center if they are shown that it won't just mean a rerun of their former failure. Convincing public officials to establish dropout centers is likely to be more difficult than finding youngsters who need and want to attend them, since the national dropout rate is estimated to be 25%.

There is the temptation to say "good riddance" to students who have often caused problems for their former schools as well as for themselves. More basic is the problem of money because dropout centers are costly in comparison with regular schools. The only way to success for a youth who has repeatedly failed in classes with 30 or more students, is to provide the smaller classes or individualized instruction he needs. Such staffing isn't cheap. But it is an economical investment if contrasted with the cost to the community of doing nothing. Unskilled and unstable dropouts are likely to spend years being supported through unemployment and welfare payments. Or worse, they may drift into criminal activity that costs society even more. There are some factors that tend to reduce the costs of dropout centers. Most dropouts must work and can only attend school part time. Often, volunteers can be used as tutors, counselors and aides. And dropout centers usually stick to the basics, leaving out sports and social activities.

Most dropouts have more than academic problems. To succeed, a dropout center must be equipped to offer individual guidance and counseling. It should also make certain that the time a student spends on the job not only provides needed income but also needed incentive for further learning. Because every dropout has a history of school failure, it's essential that dropout centers quickly proclaim to the returnee that "this is a new ball game." And those who have studied dropout centers say they often are more successful if they are housed in a building without any resemblance to typical schools. The staff has to abandon authoritarian, impersonal teaching, too, if the dropout is to be encouraged from dropping out again.

Harlem Prep

Harlem Prep is not a public school but many schools would benefit from having such a school for dropouts or "early leavers," as Harlem Prep Assistant Headmaster E. Salmon McSarlane prefers to call the school's students. Founded in 1968, the school moved its headquarters in 1969 to a remodeled

storefront whose 10,000 square feet of space were kept free of partitions and walls. Instead, classes were organized in clusters across the carpeted floor, with portable blackboards stationed where needed. "The concept of the 'one-room school,' organized to unite all elements of the learning-teaching process into an organic whole, works for Harlem Prep," headmaster Edward Carpenter said. "Wall-to-wall carpeting and the acoustical ceiling soften abrasive sounds to a gentle hum. Concrete walls painted in warm, bright hues add to the atmosphere of excitement. The openness of the school inspires openness in student and teacher. Dialogue flows easily.... Both teachers and students are involved with the total activity of the school--not in the sense of distraction--but in the sense of belonging," he added.

Students spend at least a year at Harlem Prep, during which time they generally improve their reading comprehension by at least two years. Most of the students are from 17 to 21 years old and, reflecting the community served, are black. Harlem Prep aims to not only provide young blacks with a high school education but to enable them to enter college. More than 700 colleges are now accepting Harlem graduates, who have entered such institutions as Harvard, Amherst and Wesleyan, McSarlane said. He added that three students who graduated from Harlem Prep in 1968 and went on to complete their college education have now returned to the school as faculty members. Five parents and the student body president serve on the school's board of trustees.

Harlem Prep continues to have financial problems since it is privately funded, and per-student costs are about $1,500 a year. At its June 1972 commencement, Harlem Prep's 3,000 guests were assured by an executive of Coca-Cola he would "do anything necessary to see to it Harlem Prep stays open." Although the school now has about 600 students, it is still small enough to retain a personal character. One Harlem graduate, James Rogers, commented: "If the spirit of Harlem could be introduced in large schools, they would be making giant steps, not only in education, but toward real personal relationships."

A Second Chance in St. Paul

"When the kids first came, most were lonely, resentful and hostile. Perhaps the greatest problem was an attitude of defeat. For a variety of reasons their innate curiosity had been stifled," said Kenneth Osvold, director of the Career Study Center in St. Paul, Minn.

When the center opened in March 1970, some of its first students hadn't been to school in a couple of months. Although most of the original 26 boys and 16 girls were of at least average intelligence, many were badly handicapped by their previous inability to master basic skills.

Osvold has described the center as being modeled like an intensive care unit of a modern hospital, with each student getting the attention he needs from a staff of specialists. Students follow an individualized learning program for half of each day mastering basic skills they missed in regular school. They spend the rest of the day at work on a carefully selected job.

The center opened in a downtown, nonschool location with the help of a $100,000 federal grant. Its enrollment climbed to 115 in the 1971-72 school

year. Attendance has averaged about 82%, which would be poor in a typical school, but is a big improvement for the former dropouts.

Students sit in on staff meetings and take part in informal discussions with their classmates and teachers. A board meeting is held when students and staff have problems to work out. During the lunch break, a phonograph brought from home may entertain students relaxing in a hall lounge area.

In 1972, the center moved to a new location after losing its lease because of misbehavior by a few students. Despite this setback, the center's success is illustrated by a letter from an 18-year-old graduate, now in college, who said that when he entered the center two years before, "I was then a lost, devastated and dope-swallowing dropout. That has all changed. I encountered the most growth-rendering and profound learning experience of all my school years. Most of all, I learned a sense of self-worth and confidence."

Other Drop-In Programs

Portland, Ore.: The Portland school system operates a "personalized education program" that includes Vocational Village, a school for dropouts, and the Residential Manpower Center, a local job corps. The center utilizes a downtown hotel, a former junior college and a former seminary. Vocational Village recently tripled its classroom and office space to 30,000 square feet. Under the personalized education program, grades or grade levels aren't used, courses aren't required, teachers avoid simply lecturing, community resources are frequently utilized, and students are given more responsibility and frequent positive reinforcement.

Vocational Village currently offers classes to more than 300 full- and part-time students in both day and evening classes. Attendance during the summer of 1972 totaled approximately 150 students. In addition to basic education courses, Vocational Village offers 13 different fields of study, including industrial mechanics, office occupations, food service, cosmetology and automotive technology. Vocational Village's regular-year programming is funded by the Portland Public Schools, and the night and summer school program receives funds from the Oregon Vocational and Rehabilitation Fund.

Madison, Wis.: A "diploma completion program" for dropouts, initiated in 1971 with 40 students and three instructors from the city's high school with the highest dropout rate, has been expanded to include all schools in the district. Most students take classes in the evening, both to enable them to maintain jobs and so they can avoid their former fellow students.

Takoma, Wash.: Any student over age 14 may be referred to a prevocational program for academically deficient students. The students, who may or may not have dropped out of school, are carefully evaluated. Then, an individualized program is developed that usually enables a student to work part time. Counselors check to assure good, successful work experiences for the formerly failing students.

SCHOOLS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL PROBLEMS

These schools are not for the many students who might like to try something different or are bored and restless in their regular school. They are for those students who absolutely must have a change in schooling if they are going to continue their education. These schools serve academically failing, disruptive, emotionally disturbed or pregnant students. While they vary with the type of student they serve, all have the prime objective of trying to revive or maintain a student's interest in school so he or she doesn't become a dropout and eventually will be able to return to a regular school.

Who hasn't heard a teacher or principal say something like, "If we could only get rid of those 2%, this school would be in fine shape." The alternatives for the disruptive and emotionally disturbed students enable school officials to ease pressure on their regular schools while meeting the needs of students with special problems. For this reason, such schools often are among the easiest to sell to skeptical school boards. They offer people who believe in a whole range of alternatives for all types of kids the chance to show the value of a different program for the "worst" kids, the ones for which the regular schools have no more time or patience.

"When we have a chronic disciplinary problem...we must separate that student from his classmates," Philadelphia Supt. Mark Costanzo said. "We must protect those classmates' right to an education. But, secondly, we have an equal responsibility to offer the ousted student an alternative form of education. And that alternative must not be predicated on retribution or stigmatization, but on a sincere and extensive effort of rehabilitation. There is an alternative for almost every student with just about any problem imaginable," Constanzo concluded.

Such schools are only an extension of the concept of special education for physically and mentally handicapped students. They may be opposed by those who honestly feel it is wrong to segregate and isolate students. Philosophical disagreements often may be resolved by more clearly and narrowly defining which students are to be served. These schools are not for the youth who may occasionally "act up" in class or the kid who is flunking one of his subjects, but for students with what seem to be overwhelming problems--those who will be out on the street if they don't get a change. Many school systems may want to allow pregnant students the option of staying in their regular schools as long as their doctors permit, but they should have the alternative of continuing their schooling elsewhere.

Students with special problems often require much closer attention than do able, successful students in another kind of alternative program, so the

per-pupil costs are likely to be high. But they are not a fair gauge for other alternative programs and should be weighed against the heavier cost to society if these students are not salvaged.

A Look at Louisville

Every public school system has disruptive, academically failing or pregnant students. What the system does for these students tells much about the quality of the system. The Louisville, Ky., school system has moved on several fronts to help kids who would be written off as dropouts in many places. In Louisville, three programs for students with differing problems deserve a closer look. They are:

- Junior high alternative schools for delinquents, truants or other students considered beyond the control of the regular schools.
- The Teenage Parents' Program for pregnant students.
- The Central High School Contract School, a pilot program seeking to prevent dropouts through individualized instruction.

Junior high alternative schools: Louisville school officials were concerned that each year almost 400 of the system's 52,000 students, or former students, were being sent by the courts to juvenile institutions, often to begin lives alternating between crime and imprisonment. The primary goal of the junior high alternative schools program was at the outset, very simply, to keep students enrolled in school and out of juvenile institutions.

The junior high program, which started in 1971, has about 130 students at three locations outside regular school buildings. One is at a boys' club and the other two make use of church facilities. The students, ranging from 13 to 16 years old, are largely from poor families; slightly more than half are black; and 30% are girls.

The main difference between the alternative schools and other junior highs is that the alternative school students receive individualized instruction and counseling. There is one teacher or teacher's aide for every seven students, compared with a citywide pupil-teacher ratio of 32 to 1.

The results often have been dramatic. A staff report says "many students who were only coming to school once or twice a week are coming to school four and five times a week. Students who, in the past, were plagued by numerous conflicts which resulted in knifings and fights are learning to get along with peers and authority figures. Academically, the students have progressed two years in some areas, and some who were functioning at an almost primary level are dealing successfully with work that comes closer to the level where they were placed in their regular school settings."

Businesses and agencies originally were reluctant to rent facilities for the schools, fearing vandalism. However, vandalism has been comparatively low. For example, in many regular schools it's hard to keep toilet paper available in the lavatories. However, at the alternative junior highs--where

the students are employed at 80¢ an hour as custodians and in many other capacities--this has not been a problem. About half the students work two hours a day, some tutoring elementary students or assisting in daycare centers. The 80¢ an hour helps develop a positive attitude in many students by giving them a sense of worth and responsibility.

Recruitment of teachers for the program has been handicapped by limitations on salaries, especially for teacher aides. Despite this, the per-pupil cost is about $2,000, compared with an average $685 for students in the city's regular schools.

However, the staff report notes, "In the long run it will be much more economical for society to pay for an alternative school than to keep men in prison for 10 to 15 years. Over 60% of the children in juvenile institutions in the state of Kentucky are from Jefferson County (Louisville). If students can be kept out of juvenile institutions, their chances of staying out of prison will be much better."

The junior high alternative schools are a regular part of the Louisville school system and are strongly supported by top school officials. Most parents have been very pleased with the results. "For once in their lives, parents are getting positive feedback on their children," Greg Hemesath, director of the program, said.

Some teachers have had problems adjusting their techniques and some have dropped out. But others have developed with more experience in the program.

When the alternative junior highs were started, it was hoped that all students would be able to make sufficient adjustment in time to return to regular senior highs. However, the staff report says, "we now realize that many of our students have become so dependent on a close personal relationship with their teacher that they can never return to a regular classroom in which they will not receive close attention." As a result, Louisville plans to begin a senior high alternatives program as well as extending in the other direction to include sixth graders.

Teen-Age Parents Program: A downtown YWCA building provides classrooms, a kitchen, clinic, gym, swimming pool and other facilities without charge for this special school program. Up to 150 pregnant girls in grades 7-12 attend the school at one time, having been referred by school counselors or having applied directly. Girls transfer into the school in their fourth or fifth month of pregnancy and remain there until six weeks following delivery or until their doctor certifies they are able to return to their regular school.

Classes are conducted by a staff of five teachers. The staff also includes a counselor, nurse, social worker, nutritionist and part-time psychiatrist. A prenatal clinic in the "Y" building makes it easy for the girls to obtain all medical services, which are provided by the U. of Louisville Medical School. Family planning information and contraceptives are also available.

The voluntary program served almost 400 students in the 1971-72 school year. The pupil-teacher ratio is about 20 to 1, better than the citywide average, and the annual cost is about $1,500 per student--more than twice the

average per-pupil expenditure in Louisville. However, 75% of the school's cost is supported through federal funds.

Central High School Contract School: Started in September 1971, this pilot project in an inner-city high school with the city's highest dropout rate (about 30% annually), seeks to determine if many of these dropouts can be kept in school through individualized programs that, for a change, enable them to succeed. The program for 120 students makes use of a portable classroom next to the main high school building. It is equipped with programmed learning materials that enable the students to move at their own pace after agreeing on "contracts" on their objectives with the supervising teacher. Credit is given for meeting the contract and attendance is not mandatory. Students usually are enrolled when they tell school officials they want to drop out of the regular school.

Seattle, Wash.

How do you meet all the needs of 80,000 students in an urban district facing mammoth problems--increasing racial isolation, student alienation and disaffection, economic recession and community demands for educational accountability? Currently, the Seattle (Wash.) School District is trying to solve these problems by hitting them head on. Admitting to "student disenchantment and failure and a general malaise evidenced by rising incidences of disruption and spiraling numbers of dropouts and suspended students," the district now offers two general types of alternatives to its students: dropout or dropout-prevention-oriented programs and "open," "innovative" or "free" schools.

Funding for the programs--13 of which operate on a full-time basis and 23 part-time reentry programs--comes from a variety of sources and amounts to approximately $2 million, according to Alternative Education, a booklet prepared by the Seattle Alternative Education Task Force. The following show the variety of alternative programs for actual or potential dropouts:

- The Extended Service Program (ESP), with funding from both the Seattle Model Cities Program and the Urban Racial Rural Disadvantaged, offers 100 grade 7-12 students a chance to return to regular school or to continue their education and training through some other means. ESP operates in five centers, each built around a theme selected by the students themselves. The program emphasizes involvement of the students' families in the educational program; physical and mental health counseling; assistance to students on juvenile probation or parole; and work experience opportunities providing part-time employment for some of the students.

- The Joyful Alternative Learning Experience (JALE) is a dropout-oriented program for 50 students, age 14-18, primarily operating at Ballard High School. JALE, with two years' experience under its belt, encourages dropout-prone students to participate in setting their own goals and planning their own programs and to "contract" for the amount of work and experience necessary to meet the program's objectives. The community is invited to take part in JALE through a community advisory committee; parents help plan their children's education; and students frequently do their bit by becoming involved in community betterment.

- The Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), a cooperative effort of the Seattle Public Schools, the City of Seattle and the U.S. Dept. of Labor, emphasizes individualized instruction for its 80 to 100 students in grades 10-12. To insure entry into career-directed occupations or further skills training beyond high school, students spend most of their time on reading, writing, communications skills and mathematics. Along with the educational program offered by the district, the regular NYC staff provides a strong counseling and career guidance program.

- Project Interchange has been helping students at the 9th- to 12th-grade level for five years. In 1972, it opened enrollment to fifth and sixth graders as well, and now has a total enrollment of 165 students. Aimed toward youngsters whose grades, attitudes and behavioral patterns indicate they are on the way to dropping out, the program emphasizes the basic skills of reading, math and English and uses highly individualized instruction. Occupational training and work experience facilitate entry into career-directed, self-sustaining occupations.

- Lincoln Evening School, in its second year of operation, focuses its attention on students in grades 10-12 who have previously dropped out of high school but who wish to complete their graduation requirements and to upgrade their job skills. Although the evening school also provides enrichment courses to the adult community, the high school portion of the program is limited to courses required for graduation.

What Some Other School Systems Are Doing

Since every school system has students with special problems, it is not surprising that more and more are providing alternatives to meet those special needs. Here are some of the plans now in effect:

Grand Rapids, Mich.: Two "Centers for Secondary School Studies" served 200 sixth to twelfth graders "who have difficulty in adjusting in regular school or who have learning skill deficiencies." Students who are suspended for extended periods from regular schools, as well as those in grades 6-9 who apply, are considered for admission. Grand Rapids also has established Park School, which serves about 120 pregnant students, including 30% from nearby school systems. During the 1972-73 school year, Grand Rapids plans to extend its alternatives to two types of high schools for nondisruptive, nonfailing students who want more individualized offerings.

Ketchikan, Alaska: A unique vocational education program called Sea Ed teaches potential dropouts, including some girls, fishing, navigation and other "occupations of the sea." Few of the students have a "C" average or better when they enroll in the 10th grade, yet they have shown marked improvement in learning and all have jobs waiting for them in the area's fisheries industry when they graduate. Tenth graders begin by taking marine biology and a special English course stressing maritime interests. In 11th grade the students study navigation-related math, piloting, electronic navigation devices, fish harvesting, conservation, engine

repairs, hydraulics, refrigeration and small business management. In 12th grade, optional courses include seamanship, marine electronics and power mechanics. Throughout the program there are field trips on boats which the students help crew.

Los Angeles: A "Community Centered Classroom," a program for 12- to 15-year-olds operated by four junior high schools, provides an alternative to dropping out. Each school has established an off-campus classroom for 10 students, a teacher and an aide who meet together as a coeducational, self-contained class. The class units are informal, utilize the community as a classroom, and deemphasize grades. Youngsters are referred to the program by teachers and parents, who keep in closer-than-usual contact with each other.

Madison, Wis.: The district started its first alternative program more than four years ago under the title, "A General Educational Program with a Pre-Vocational Thrust." Aimed at offering an option for underachievers identified in the 8th and 9th grades, the program enrolls 50 students each year. The curriculum has a strong vocational emphasis, gives students much involvement in decision making, makes use of frequent field trips, and develops a good esprit de corps among the small group. Though started with federal funds provided under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the program is now funded entirely by the school system.

Montgomery County, Md.: Mark Twain School, an alternative school operated by a Washington, D.C., suburban district--Montgomery County, Md.--opened in early 1972. It serves 250 students, "ages 11-18, of at least average intellectual potential who have difficulty in the areas of human relationships, self-organization or other behaviorally linked learning problems." The new school building is divided into units for 100 students aged 11 and 12; 100 students, 13 to 15 years old; and 50 students aged 16 through graduation. The school is further organized into nongraded learning teams composed of 50 students, six teachers, a team coordinator and volunteer assistants. The school operates on the concept that "a theurapeutic program results when a pupil's learning and personality limitations, strengths and potentials are dealt with in a way that enables him to be successful in school tasks." When students achieve that goal, they may return to their regular school. Or, as Bill Porter, principal of Mark Twain, puts it: "Students come to Mark Twain to leave it."

OPEN SCHOOLS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Alternative schools are not only for the less successful students with the most problems, but for the best ones with the brightest prospects. It is hard for a mediocre school system to ignore its dropouts and disruptive pupils. Too often, however, the more able students who could be challenged and stimulated to do much more are to a large extent overlooked as long as they keep quiet and get A's and B's.

Open schools often offer an answer for students and parents who are looking for more than they are getting from standard, stratified, undeviating and unimaginative schools.

Open schools aren't for everyone, even their most excited advocates usually will agree. There are youngsters who lack the self-discipline to move forward when a school's restraints are relaxed. But probably many more children would do well in open schools than the traditionalists are ready to concede. Some critics of open schools keep asking how you make sure that the kids aren't shirking. Some are suspicious because most students are quite obviously happier in an open environment. But students inspired by the possibilities of an open school aren't fighting learning, as are many youngsters in strait-laced schools. They are chasing after it.

Open school supporters say the concern of critics that their students won't learn basic subjects is unwarranted and unfair, in view of the frequent failings of traditionally organized, toe-the-line schools. The open school people urge a much broader evaluation of what a school and its students are accomplishing.

St. Paul Open School

There are no tests, no bells, no letter grades, no dress code and no compulsory class attendance. But plenty of learning is going on, accompanied by a lot of satisfaction and pride, observers say. The place is a three-story former factory building in St. Paul, Minn., that is brightly decorated inside and out. Yellows and purples, oranges and greens enliven doors, walls and bookcases.

This open school was proposed by a citizens group called Alternatives, Inc., and is now part of the St. Paul school system. In its first year, 1971-72, it had 500 students ranging from kindergarten to 12th-grade level--there are no grades--and another 750 students on the waiting list for admission. The student body is divided evenly between boys and girls and older

and younger students, with 14% of the enrollment being black, which is above the city average.

No one is forced to take any course, but students are urged to live up to the commitment they make when they sign up for a subject. Unlike some "free schools" where students may do whatever they please indefinitely, the St. Paul Open School expects each child to meet with his adviser, one of the teachers, to regularly review his plans.

The school is organized into major learning areas such as art, humanities, music-drama, math-science and industrial arts. The teachers, who prefer to call themselves "learning facilitators," seek to maximize the learning involved in the multiple activities. The prospect of the new type of school was so exciting for many of the students that they showed up by the score a week before it opened to help make the hasty renovations of the former factory building.

The school has only 17 teachers, seven of whom are part time, but there are 20 teacher aides. The teachers were carefully chosen from 100 applicants, many of whom were dissatisfied with their former schools. Throughout the year they have showed the same enthusiasm as the students. "It's very exciting," Principal Wayne Jennings said. "Parents say their kids are interested in school now, and that's a change. It's quite an adventure for all of us."

The classrooms have a homelike appearance. Instead of the standard school desks, many have donated furniture such as beat-up armchairs, tables and table lamps and overstuffed sofas. Students follow their own interests. A 15-year-old and an 11-year-old may find themselves working side by side in the same science laboratory, or a 10-year-old may be helping a 6-year-old learn to read.

Because the St. Paul Open School makes use of many volunteers and relies on students' own self-direction in many instances, the per-pupil cost is actually less than the average for the city. The school was launched with the aid of $125,200 in private grants and $100,000 in federal funds from Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and received a Bush Foundation grant in the summer of 1972 to pay for teacher preparation.

To answer the concern of those who wonder whether students may be missing important learning in such an open environment, a school statement says: "Elimination of compulsion or requirements usually serves to reduce resistance and hostility and to increase willingness and openness to try new experiences."

Some students who took a course entitled "Prehistoric Life," made a large paper mache replica of a triceratops. Others picked up valuable knowledge of fossils when they went on a camping trip in South Dakota's Badlands.

To those who may question the need for open schools, Jennings has noted that many graduates of typical, traditionally organized schools "don't show up to vote, never visit a library in their lives, watch tasteless programs on television, don't participate in the community and are prejudiced. The ultimate test of school is life."

The Joy of Learning

The St. Paul Open School operates under the following code:

We seek to establish a program in which people:

1. Approach learning with confidence and joy.
2. See themselves as worthwhile persons.
3. Are basically comfortable but at the same time are committed to respond honestly to others' actions.
4. Have an active, positive regard for every person as an individual.
5. Develop an understanding of human social systems and physical environments.
6. Develop and reassess personal values by involvement with diverse value systems.
7. Develop social skills including conciliation, persuasion, honest communication and group decision making.
8. Develop basic skills including reading, writing, speaking, computation and learning.
9. Develop good health habits, physical fitness and recreational skills.
10. Develop willingness to take risks, participate actively even in the face of uncertainty, develop commitments and become involved.
11. Think through and deal with possible consequences of their personal decisions and actions.
12. Develop a sense of awe and wonder; a capacity for aesthetic appreciation and enjoyment.
13. Are creative, curious, open to new experiences.
14. Believe their individual actions can influence the course of events.
15. Practice and develop the ability to critically evaluate information received for use in decision making.
16. Recognize the humor and incongruity that is part of the human experience.

Other Open Schools

The rigid restraints on schools imposed by uniform class periods, unimaginative conformity to Carnegie unit requirements and the inertia of administrative convenience are being broken down in many schools where students are assuming more responsibility and school officials, too, are not satisfied with the standard "production line" education. Some examples of secondary schools that are both public and open:

Brooklyn, N.Y.: One of the largest open high schools, John Dewey, has 2,750 students and has been operating since 1969. The school evolved out of a 10-day conference of New York City principals charged with proposing a plan for an experimental high

school. They urged the adoption of many of John Dewey's characteristics--the longer, 8-hour day, abolition of grade levels, instruction in practical arts for the college-bound, incorporation of what are usually extracurricular activities into the curriculum, and involvement of the classroom teacher in guidance.

John Dewey High's school day is divided into 22 twenty-minute modules. Computers are used to schedule students and courses in a highly individualized and complicated fashion. "While computers are essential, another school could emulate parts of the program without them," Principal Sol Levine said. "For instance, an English department could break up its courses into several shorter ones."

Dewey accepts students from throughout Brooklyn while maintaining a racial percentage similar to the average among students throughout the borough. A visitor to Dewey will see students lounging on the front steps, chatting in the halls, quietly doing independent work in resource centers and, in general, acting as if they liked their school and were glad to be there. The only grades Dewey students get are "M" for mastery, "M" with qualification and "R" for retention. Leslie Max, mathematics department supervisor, estimated that about 10% of the students aren't able to handle Dewey's "open-endedness," its reliance on individual student initiative. Jack Metzger, a guidance counselor, said, "We're not necessarily better. We're an alternative."

Herricks, N.Y.: This district started a "community school" in September 1971 in response to student requests. About 100 juniors and seniors are enrolled, grouped in one of four interest areas: human relations, aesthetics, technology or communications. The groups decide on new programs of study and the students keep logbooks of their activities.

The school has two rooms set aside in the local high school, but students also take some regular courses and must meet minimum scholastic requirements. "Beyond those, the student is free to take what is of interest to him. This means bringing in teachers from the community or university or going out to be an apprentice in a work situation, for instance, with an architect or theater group," said Richard Mascolo, an assistant school superintendent who co-directs the school.

Newton, Mass.: The Newton school system, long regarded by many educators as one of the nation's best, located the Murray Road School in a former elementary school. The school has no cafeteria (students bring their lunches); no library, science labs, auditorium or gym (a ping-pong table is the only piece of physical education equipment). There are 115 students, grades 10-12, all in the college-bound group. The atmosphere is very informal, with few rules or requirements. Students are required to take English and a year of American history, but otherwise, the students suggest what they would like to study and the eight teachers propose courses they would like to offer. A catalog of course offerings is developed after compromises on both sides. Subjects may include child psychology, conversational French, the "Alienated Individual in Literature," or computer programming.

Despite the freedom offered at Murray Road, one student said, "The standards here, which are self-imposed, are much harder to fulfill (than those in regular schools). To really fulfill them, one must do a few things excellently rather than many things fairly." While the school is open to all students who attend Newton High, it has attracted only the more liberal, "hip," college-bound students. Four out of every five Murray Road graduates go on to college.

Louisville, Ky.: The Brown School took over occupancy of seven floors of a former office building when it opened in September 1972. The 500 students, ranging in age from 8 to 16, are divided equally between boys and girls, whites and blacks. About one-third are disadvantaged. The school features an open physical structure, non-gradedness, multi-age grouping, individualized study, student involvement in decision making, a strong emphasis on the arts and frequent utilization of the city's commercial, civic and cultural resources.

"The school has a rich opportunity in that it sits on top of a performing arts center, the Brown Theater, and we plan to use the entire community as a classroom," school director Martha Ellison said. "Within a few blocks of our school are a fine public library, YMCA and YWCA, industries, businesses, one of the country's leading newspapers, a museum, a university, a college, a community college, a river, a park and city and county governments." She added: "People are afraid of change, but we can see lots of changes that need to be made. We at the Brown School hope to make them."

SCHOOLS FOR RACIAL OR ETHNIC GROUPS

Probably the most controversial alternative schools are those established with the announced objective of catering to the needs of a particular racial or ethnic group only. While many private schools, whether or not they admit it, continue their exclusive practices, de jure segregated public schools have been illegal since the Supreme Court's 1954 decision.

Schools for racial or ethnic groups raise more than legal questions. Even if they avoid being successfully challenged as illegally segregated schools, such institutions raise profound social and educational issues. One concerns their impact on society. Most Americans recognize the value of racially integrated schools in promoting the move toward a more racially integrated society. But some blacks in recent years have joined the shrinking minority of white segregationists in urging that separatism has its own social and cultural rewards.

Another leading question, one which applies to every school in the nation and not just to alternative schools, is whether children are better educated in racially segregated or racially integrated schools. Or, perhaps, does it make any difference? Here, educators intensely disagree as to the effect on academic learning. But few would dispute the claim that going to school with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds is an education in itself.

Two of the better known schools for racial and ethnic groups are Black House and Casa de la Raza in Berkeley, Calif. While many black and Chicano students throughout the country have no choice but to attend de facto segregated schools, these two small alternative schools have the declared purpose of serving students from their particular minority groups who wish to attend.

Berkeley's Wide Range of Alternatives

In 1968 Berkeley became the first American city of more than 100,000 people to integrate its schools voluntarily by busing both whites and blacks. This integration created a climate in which blacks (45% of the population), Orientals (9%) and Chicanos (4%) demanded more emphasis in school on their cultural heritages and particular problems. Meanwhile, many of Berkeley's middle-class white youngsters were frustrated in school and rebelling against what they regarded as stultifying school rules and courses.

So, with $3.6 million in federal aid from the U.S. Office of Education, Berkeley in the past four years has been establishing a wide variety of alternative schools. As of September 1972, 24 of the schools were serving 5,500

students, one-third of the student population in a city best known for its U. of California campus and breathtaking hills, but which also has its share of dilapidated housing and factories.

In addition to Black House and Casa de la Raza, some of the other Berkeley alternatives are:

- Agora: For 160 high school students, including equal numbers of whites, blacks, Orientals and Chicanos. A "Multicultural Experience" course focusing on black, Oriental, Chicano and white history is taken by all students.

- College Prep: Started in 1972 with 100 tenth-graders who are motivated to read and to prepare for college. Special attention is paid to Afro-American studies.

- East Campus: Strong emphasis is placed on learning basic skills and discussing the problems of its 175 high school students.

- John Muir Child Development Center: For children at the K-3 level, with 400 of the school's 472 students participating in open classroom programs structured around learning stations and individualized instruction.

- Kilimanjaro: The 50 students in K-6 levels receive strong emphasis in literary and artistic expression. All decisions regarding the school are made at a weekly parents' meeting.

- Lincoln Environmental Studies: For 200 students in grades 4-6, the school stresses basic skills, a strong link between students and their homeroom teacher, and optional activities such as drama, cooking, photography and swimming.

Most of the Berkeley alternatives are raising as many questions as they are trying to answer. "We must bear in mind that these are all experiments, but I feel somehow something good is going to come out of every one of them," Glena Crumul, director of the John Muir center, said.

Black House

"Black House is segregated only in the sense that its students, of their own will, have chosen to separate themselves from Berkeley High School," wrote Buddy Jackson, founder of Black House. Horace Upshaw, the tall, bearded director, agrees, adding that the school's all-black enrollment of 60 high school students is a result of its aim of meeting special needs of black students and that no white student has ever applied.

Black House's curriculum focuses on black studies. Courses offered include African history, "Black People and the Law," and black-oriented music and art. Personal commitment to social needs is a major theme, and many students fulfill this commitment by making frequent field trips to nearby prisons. At the Black House facility, outside consultants offer expertise in many areas of learning and it is becoming a community center used by many groups.

Among the black community, Black House is regarded in mixed fashion, with some people concerned about its segregation, others wondering whether its courses are accredited (they are, though only four of the 20 teachers have certificates), and others questioning its future. Upshaw says the school is rigorous in its rule that students are not allowed to lean on their blackness as an excuse for not working.

Casa de la Raza

"We try to answer what we call Chicano needs because traditional education has proved to be dysfunctional to Chicano students," said Victor Acosta, the bearded and poncho-wearing young director of Casa de la Raza (meaning, "The House of the Race or Chicano People").

Organized on the family concept, Casa de la Raza serves 150 students ranging from kindergarten to 12th-grade level, with the students coming from about 50 families. It seems to have more support in the community than Black House, perhaps because parents are actively involved in decision making.

Chicano studies dealing with subjects like Cesar Chavez are included, but the school also places heavy stress on fundamentals. The curriculum is largely in English, though Spanish words are often included in cultural studies. English-as-a-second-language is provided for those who need it.

HEW Reacts to a Complaint by Sen. McClellan

In December 1971, Sen. John McClellan, D-Ark., filed a complaint with the Justice Dept. against Black House and Casa de la Raza, charging they violate the federal civil rights statutes. After an investigation, HEW informed Berkeley school officials in April 1972 that "the continued operation of Casa de la Raza and Black House, as these programs are presently constituted," puts the Berkeley school system in "probable noncompliance" with the 1964 Civil Rights Act and subject to loss of federal funds.

J. Stanley Pottinger, director of HEW's Office for Civil Rights, said, "On the one hand, the Casa de la Raza and Black House experiments can be viewed as well intentioned, good faith attempts on the part of a local education agency which has undergone several years of voluntary desegregation to make its gains more relevant by experimenting with programs that might serve identified educational needs of particular ethnic and racial groups. In the present case, however," Pottinger said, "the school district has excluded non-minority children on grounds based solely on race or ethnic origin, not on careful analysis and identification of specific educational needs that may exist predominantly or even uniquely among minority children."

HEW's citing of the two Berkeley schools for alleged "reverse discrimination" is ironic in view of the Berkeley school system's own analysis of educational problems. In a proposal for funding of an experimental schools program submitted to the U.S. Office of Education, Berkeley officials labeled "institutional racism" as the dominant educational problem. "Institutional racism," they said, "may be defined as those organizational structures, prac-

tices and traditions which consistently result in an inequitable distribution of 'payoffs' for minorities within the institution. It is like a computer, programmed to eject results that benefit, in the main, the 'white' constituency.... Role expectations are locked into the institution, and it is this rigidity which is now being challenged in education" (through the alternatives program), the analysis stated.

The Berkeley officials also had stressed that "the concept of pluralism is essential for consideration as the society grapples with the process of moving from an historically racist and exclusive society to a more open, inclusive one.... Pluralism demands that choices, options and alternatives exist."

Federal officials could add, however, that when an alternative school denies admittance to a student because of his race or origin, it offers no alternative for that particular student.

A WORD OF ADVICE

Alternative schools provide no guarantee of educational excellence. Like traditional schools, they are only as good as the people in them. And they are subject to more potential problems than the typical school, many of whose faults may go generally unnoticed because they have been present so long.

Three of the chief concerns about alternative schools are how to start one, how to evaluate one and how to finance one. Each of these key topics is discussed in a succeeding section. But this still leaves many other potential problems that the school official should appreciate and seek to avoid before they occur. Those experienced in setting up and operating an alternative school say it must:

- Be certain its students are acquiring the hard, basic skills.
- Provide efficient direction within a democratic community.
- Hire administrators and teachers who realize they will serve somewhat different functions than they did in traditional schools.
- Keep from being dependent on a few people--a danger in small, new schools.
- Know what other alternative schools are doing.
- Provide assurances that graduates seeking admission to college won't be penalized for being part of an unconventional program.
- Overcome administrative obstacles to innovating.
- Protect the school from attacks, particularly from other educators.
- Tell the school's story honestly.
- Remain true to public education's democratic, nondiscriminatory tradition.
- Avoid an inflated ego.

Teaching the Basic Skills

In order to survive, an alternative school, like traditional schools and free schools, must demonstrate that it does not overlook the teaching of

basic skills. If alternative schools overlook the essentials in their enthusiasm for the novel, parents and students may rightly turn elsewhere. This doesn't mean that all students must study reading from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. every day or that the multiplication tables must be drilled into every child's subconscious. But it does mean that whatever philosophy and approach an alternative school uses, it should be certain that its students are learning the more difficult skills as well as the easier ones. Anyone can inspire a class discussion over the most sensational of yesterday's headlines, but it takes a skilled teacher to arouse an unmotivated student's interest in adverbs, Milton or judicial review.

Sam Markowitz, president of the school board in Berkeley where a wide variety of alternative programs are under way, warned in April 1972, "Just saying, 'let children play in the sandbox until they learn quantum mechanics,' isn't going to work." Markowitz, a chemistry professor at the U. of California, assessed Berkeley's alternative schools: "Some are very good and very academically oriented. And some tend to be somewhat nonstructured with the teacher almost saying, 'I'm really not here; you can do what you want.' But in the last two years the students themselves have wanted more content and more structure."

Providing for Democracy and Direction

Most alternative schools reflect an open, democratic atmosphere in which students and teachers often join with administrators in developing policy and in which "town meetings" are available to all to air their concerns and complaints. A danger exists that alternative schools may be too democratic for their own good, with every little decison being referred to a committee and no one prepared to take final responsibility. Discussing the Cambridge Pilot School's first year, two staff members said that decision making by consensus of the entire staff caused "a great deal of time to be spent on minor matters, with little energy left to discuss many difficult issues which divided the staff. Another result was an inability to mobilize people for a quick decision in a crisis. Individuals felt their creativity sapped by several hours of tense meetings almost every day. ...A plan emerged for a coordinator or administrator...."

Don Glines, who started the highly innovative Wilson School in Mankato, Minn., admitted: "The first year, I operated as a dictator" to get the program moving. An alternative school doesn't require a dictator, but it does require someone or a few people to assume the administrative duties that must be carried on in the most democratic institution, a board or body to set basic policy, and an understanding of the difference between setting policy and the administrative function of seeing that it is carried out.

Staff Adjustment to Alternatives

It is often a problem for teachers and administrators used to working in a typical, traditionally organized school to adjust to the more personal, less authoritarian, more individualized, less structured atmosphere of many alternative schools. The teacher used to telling her class what the day's

assignment is, may flounder when she finds self-directed students developing their own study priorities. While rigid requirements and a uniform curriculum place limits on education, they also provide a "security blanket" that many experienced professionals find hard to give up. Freedom is invigorating but it also can be frightening. Like their students, wise teachers will learn while on-the-job, but there is need for teacher colleges to prepare teachers for alternative schools--which continue to grow in number. The universities need to catch up with public schools and begin to provide alternatives in teacher education. Some that have started new alternative programs for teachers are Indiana U., Mankato State College, U. of Massachusetts-Amherst, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, U. of Vermont and the U. of North Colorado-Greeley.

Administrators, too, must often adjust. It's one thing to be an assistant principal in a school of 3,000 students, and quite another to be the top coordinator for an alternative school of 150 students. In many respects, it should be a lot easier. As the students are far fewer, they are usually closer to the staff, who must learn to listen as well as lead. Whereas few assistant principals in large high schools teach at all, there is every reason to expect the coordinator of a small alternative school to spend some time each day at the main business of education--teaching.

Making a School Self-Perpetuating

One advantage of bureaucracy, no matter how unresponsive it is, is that it is always there. Alternative schools that are led by one or two sturdy, relentless individuals often are in danger of falling apart should the key people lose interest, take better-paying jobs or lose heart and quit. It's important for the founders of the school, once they get it rolling, to be willing to take their hands off the controls bit by bit and let others share in the power. Another suggestion from alternatives' leaders is to set up the new school so that its continuation does not depend entirely on its founders.

A corollary to this is the need to prevent energetic, idealistic teachers from "burning out" after a couple of years. Teaching in an alternative school, especially a new one, can be extremely demanding. Often teachers will become discouraged when they seem to be making little progress. An administrator needs to develop ways to ease the pressures on his staff and enable them to step back from the firing line occasionally and catch their breath.

Knowing What Others Are Doing

The alternative movement is new enough that few of the participants have had time to find out what others in the field are doing. "Unfortunately, so little research has been done in the area of alternative schools that almost everyone is doing something blind," said Robert D. Barr of Indiana U.'s School of Education. In an effort to increase communication between alternative school people, representatives from interested public schools and universities have formed the National Consortium of Alternative Schools, headquartered at Indiana U., Bloomington. An April 1972 meeting of the consortium attracted administrators, teachers, students and parents from nearly 30 school systems in 20

states. The consortium also plans a series of regional meetings. One word of caution: Knowing what others are doing may not make it any easier for you, but you'll have a better idea of what to expect.

Assuring College Acceptances

One of the main concerns of parents, particularly, in weighing whether to encourage a child to attend an alternative school is whether it will endanger his chances for admission to college. Many alternative schools have operated without traditional grading systems and therefore cannot provide class ranking or the other rating statistics that some college admissions personnel feel are the only methods of student evaluation. However, an increasing number of colleges--often, the better ones--are becoming far more flexible in their consideration of applicants. For example, when students organized the Milwaukee Independent School, an alternative school without walls, they sought assurances from colleges that their school would not be discriminated against. They got encouraging responses from many colleges.

Clearing Administrative Hurdles

Alternative public schools frequently are faced with state or school system requirements that would force the school to abandon proposed innovative features. For example, there may be legal requirements against holding classes in certain nonschool buildings, or students may be strictly required by state education codes to spend so many hours per week studying certain subjects. All the potential hang-ups should be researched before the alternative school runs into them. Then, where there is a restriction that would block the way, advance clearance should be sought from school system or state officials before the matter becomes an issue. If a local school board is nervous about bending a requirement, an alternative program may be able to get support from specialists at the state level who are interested in promoting educational innovations. Illinois, Florida and Washington are three states whose education departments are encouraging alternatives.

Guarding Your Flanks

Almost anything new makes people nervous, so alternative school people can expect some suspicion, jealousy, indifference and hostility. Those experienced in operating alternative schools say hostility won't come from the public --which is anxious for educational changes--but from school bureaucrats upset that a school operating an alternative program may make theirs look bad. Innovators in alternative schools also advise:

- You should not wait for the flak to fly, but set out immediately to cultivate goodwill. Often, the press will provide sympathetic stories of what is planned.

- Be careful not to oversell, and never, never knock the system's regular schools. Speak of your school as what it is, an alternative to the typical, traditionally organized school, not a replacement for it.

- Try from the onset to involve in the planning people in the community and school system so that they will feel they had something to do with starting it. If your school is good, the positive reaction of students and parents will soon develop a base of strong popular support.

Having Impact Beyond Your Own Students

A successful alternative school has to do more than teach its own students. It has to show the way to others in and out of its own school system, alternative school leaders say. While some alternative schools have become nationally known, often their pioneering is not noticed by nearby traditional schools. This is called "the lighthouse effect"--a distant bright beam, but darkness next door. Means of transferring teachers, students and ideas need to be developed. It has to be done softly and without fanfare, if professional jealousies aren't to be stirred up. Likewise, an alternative school should be on the lookout for and receptive to worthwhile practices in other schools.

Keep It Public and Open

An alternative school should never forget that it is a public school, proponents say. While it may have a special purpose, such as keeping failing students from dropping out, it is not an exclusive school for special people. The emphasis has to be on choice. Once alternative schools start setting up restrictions and limitations on enrollment, they are running the risk of being seized by segregationists with entirely different motivations.

Pride Goeth Before a Fall

One of the dangers of success is that some people then start to take themselves too seriously. Moreover, no matter how good an alternative program may be, it is only one alternative, experienced administrators say. They point out that the school system should encourage or at least investigate other alternatives which may be more successful or more suitable to their needs than the one they have adopted.

STARTING AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

Every school system needs some "vice presidents for heresy," according to Don Glines. But he also has conceded: "If people are not really dissatisfied, nothing is going to happen. As long as they're satisfied, you're stuck."

Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on your point of view, nearly every school system has its share of dissatisfied students, teachers, parents and taxpayers. While many people may be fully satisfied with their schools, many others aren't. The unsatisfied group is both the justification for an alternative experiment and the chief initial source of support for it. Glines has estimated that in most communities the public can be grouped into five catagories in regard to their willingness to promote or accept change:

- 3% are innovators
- 15% are early adapters
- 34% comprise the early majority
- 34% comprise the late majority
- 15% are the laggards

While the 3% figure for innovators is proportionately small, even in a small school system it amounts to more than enough people to start an alternative school. If the school succeeds, then the much larger group of "early adapters" will probably be ready to support a variety of different alternatives. Meanwhile, the laggards and others wanting no change, may be honestly assured that their alternative can continue to be the same traditional school they like.

What Not To Do

"Don't get people arguing. Preach the whole alternatives gospel," Glines said. Or, as another alternative school organizer said, "You are sealing your doom if you attack the existing system wholesale."

The surest way to guarantee the failure of an alternative program is to impose it upon a community as the brainchild of a few school officials or education professors but lacking prior input from students, teachers, parents and other key groups whose role may be more important than is obvious at first.

Surveying Needs

There are basically two reasons for broadly surveying needs before coming to any conclusions. First, of course, is to develop the kind of school actually needed. Second, is to develop support for the new school through self-commitment or, at least, calm awareness. People who have helped develop, or at least talked about, an innovation are less likely to feel threatened or to attack it.

Conan S. Edwards, director of high schools in Madison, Wis., said "three of our alternatives were developed with the counsel of the various groups involved, and one was very much a unilateral creation. The latter is doomed to mediocrity or, perhaps, total failure."

Edwards said problems with the "doomed" school, Malcom Shabazz High School, "seem to stem from the following sources":

- Planning involved only one person (along with a representative of the private foundation) who withdrew when implementation occurred.
- There was almost totally inadequate planning of the details for fulfilling graduation requirements.
- Total financial independence from the Madison Public School District was maintained.
- The built-in attitude of total independence...precluded a cooperative alternative effort within the school district organization.

Selling an Alternative

The superintendent of an Illinois school system staked his job on being able to convince his school board of the need for approving innovative alternative programs. The programs failed to win board support and the superintendent lost his job when he decided the only course open was to resign. Since hired by another school system, he confided that he had done an insufficient job of selling the value of alternatives. "I goofed and I don't want it to happen again," he said in telling how he is now taking extra pains to clear the way for innovations.

Alternative schools tend to be more community-oriented than traditional schools are. They make greater use of nonprofessionals as teachers, aides or advisors, and they more frequently capitalize on nonschool facilities as places to learn. Therefore, it is especially important for alternative schools to be aware of that large segment of the public who are neither students, teachers or parents, but may have something to offer. At least, some carefully presented advance information may prevent an ignorant neighbor of a new school from trying to panic a community.

At some point, alternative school organizers should probably go to the local press to present their plan in a positive way that can win support from it. But it may be wise to wait awhile, however, until your plans have crys-

tallized. "In dealing with the media, you must decide if early publicity will hurt you or help you," said Sophia Gorham, a parent from Grand Rapids, Mich. She added, "You shouldn't rely just on newspapers" to get the word out.

Often, a carefully drafted flyer or mimeographed sheet will not only interest potential students but also bring in offers of support from throughout the community. One put out by the Racine, Wis., district provided basic information in a way aimed at defusing potential opposition. For example, under the question, "Is this a school for problem students?" the answer was: "The school is not aimed at any one particular group of students, except that it is designed for students who might be dissatisfied with their present educational experiences and may wish to try a new approach. This includes students who may be very successful in grades as well as those not very successful in this area." To the question, "Where will the school be?" the announcement said, "The site has not yet been selected but a centrally located existing building is being sought. This will not be an elaborate building, and special facilities already existing will not be reproduced." The approach in Racine was well enough presented to convince a conservative school board that included two members of the John Birch Society of the need for an alternative high school.

It's Not Easy

Alternative schools don't just happen. They require a lot of work to get going. "You have to pay for a program. It's just not as easy as some people think," said Edward Miggins, of Cleveland's PACE Association, a citizen group with a professional staff that since 1963 has acted as a catalyst in developing educational programs to assist Cleveland public schools. In April 1972, Miggins said there was "a tremendous conflict" going on trying to get alternative schools "started in urban school systems."

Often, alternative schools are hastily organized in reaction to urgent demands. The results can be painful, as was the case with the Mantua-Powolton Mini-School in Philadelphia, which started in 1968 with 150 students in grades 5-8 as an experiment in total community control of a school. "The whole thing started without much thought," said Forrest Adams, who helped create the school and then directed it. "The mini-school started from a reaction of people who thought they could do better than the system was doing to educate their kids. The result was a lot of confusion and a lot of chaos and an awful lot of energy consumed by people who were sincere in their effort but somewhat misguided. The philosophy was very unclear, and that's what we had to spend two years unraveling," he said in Seven Schools, a book on experimental schools in Philadelphia.

Wayne Jennings, director of the St. Paul Open School, has related some of the tough problems it first ran into: "The decision to begin the school came too late to permit planning, adequate budget allotments and preparation of the building. The staff, none of whom had worked in such a program before, met for the first time just two weeks before the students arrived. One week before the students came, a rough office building was acquired and had to be converted. For the first six weeks only three-fourths of the space was available.... School began without a typewriter in the building, no ditto machine,

no mimeograph machine and literally no equipment. Material was begged and accumulated from any source. Teachers suddenly had to cope with the tough problems of student accountability, scheduling, responsible freedom, control and direction, how to intervene, providing stimulating choices, and messiness.... Far from the appearance of being permissive and endorsing lack of structure, teachers needed to learn great organizational and planning skills to reduce chaos and random wandering by children."

Possibilities Within the Public Schools

"Public education does not have to be an either-or proposition. In the system we envision, everyone can have his way, with the assurance that no one will take it away in a general referendum," Samuel Nash, director of special projects and planning in New Haven, Conn., said. "Let every parent have his choice, and let everyone choose from a variety of educational alternatives. The traditionalists can choose the traditional structure; the open schoolers can choose the open school; the dancers, painters and photographers can choose a school for the performing arts, and so on down the line," he added. To do this, Nash said in an article in School Management, school board members need to shift from being choosers for the public to becoming facilitators and matchmakers, providing different educational approaches for different needs.

Many people--both alternative school advocates and old-line public school administrators--may doubt whether alternative schools can be created and survive within public school systems. Mike Hickey, who oversees alternative programs in Seattle, said, "For the public school system, alternative education promotes an openness to change and a mirror by which the system can critically examine both its motives and methods. Further, the programs can serve as an impetus to change by counteracting the inertia and complacency which unquestioned acceptance has produced in the public schools."

Hickey continued, "For alternative education, an alliance with public education can lead to validation of a major tenet of today's society, namely, that change can occur within the system. The brief life span of most alternative programs outside the system substantiates the fact that even the best ideals and the deepest fervor do not obviate the need for an educational program of some kind....

"Public education has indeed been guilty at times of reducing education to blandness. On the other hand, alternative education has been too prone to accept the aroma of success as indicative of its goal attainment.... The price of affiliation with public school systems is accountability, but that is not too large a price to pay if a program is intellectually honest and emotionally sound," Hickey said.

EVALUATING A SCHOOL AND ITS STUDENTS

> If evaluation is to be of any educational worth, it cannot be regarded as it is in most schools, as a postmortem that takes place after the student has died. Evaluation must become an integral part of the total learning process and not an appendage to it. True evaluation takes place on a day-to-day or, more accurately, a minute-to-minute basis, but this is possible only in a learning community structured to encourage spontaneous feedback and which thereby permits interaction.
>
> --John Bremer
> The School Without Walls

The above quote from John Bremer, original director of the Parkway "School Without Walls" program in Philadelphia, illustrates his skepticism about the value of evaluation. He once summed up his position by saying: "Anything worth evaluating cannot be evaluated and anything that can be evaluated is not worth evaluating."

Many other alternative school people share his view. They know that evaluations often have been no more than a device to "check up on" or to "put down" experimental programs. They criticize much conventional evaluation found in traditional schools as providing too narrow a yardstick by which to gauge education. They charge that occasionally outside evaluators are more interested in promoting a theory than fairly recording what they find. They contend that a small, infant program can be smothered by "instant analysis" that results in a lot more statistics than students. They maintain that evaluations often are unimaginative and essentially unrevealing, showing only the obvious and leaving the more subtle to continued conjecture.

Citing these and other reasons, A Quality Schools Network for Illinois, a 1971 report for the Illinois state superintendent, concluded: "In theory, evaluation of ongoing educational programs is usually seen as vital to program effectiveness. Evaluation is expected to demonstrate which educational programs are effective, to provide new knowledge about educational processes ...and to form the basis for a feedback loop considered crucial by many educational theorists and planners." The report added: "Evaluation is expected to help teachers and school administrators think more clearly about what they are doing.... In practice, based on the experience of the schools we analyzed, evaluation has had almost no effect on the development of experimental programs."

However, few would deny that evaluation of a school and its students goes on in one form or another, regardless of its value. The objective, then, should be to make evaluation as relevant and meaningful as possible not only for the school board and parents but also for the school and its students.

Basically, there are two interrelated types of evaluation. One indicates how well students are doing. The other indicates how well the school is performing. While student evaluation is concerned with the immediate progress of individuals, it also is the most important ingredient in the evaluation of a whole school program.

Evaluation: More Than Tests?

A state school official told a discussion group, "We have always thought of evaluations as being only tests, so it's kind of hard to get away from that kind of hang-up." Firmin L. Alexander, administrator of the Learning

Evaluate Your Way Out of Chaos

In trying to figure out the "state of the art" in evaluating alternative education programs, a special task force of the National Consortium of Alternative Schools decided that (1) an art it is not; and (2) the only state it is in is a state of general chaos.

The task force, which focused its attention on program evaluation, said "much of the hostility toward evaluation has arisen from failure to understand what evaluation is all about. The blame for this failure rests equally with both sides: the evaluator for not clarifying what he is doing and why, and for imposing an evaluation design on the program; the program director for not requiring full explanation of the process and its underlying rationale and for not taking the initiative for developing, at least partially, the evaluation design."

Evaluation seems to be a fact of life, however, and the task force concluded it could not be rejected--for some very practical reasons. "For alternative education programs, at least for those in public education, evaluation is part of today's reality, the price to be paid for spending the public's money.... The public is demanding accountability of its education programs and accountability means, in part, evaluation." The task force came up with the following additional purposes for evaluation:

- Providing internal self-improvement for the program, which in turn relates to the ongoing planning process.
- Establishing the program's credibility with a variety of publics. ("Whether or not the program evaluates, other people do.")
- Providing a base for identifying those alternatives that work and those that don't.
- Providing an adequate understanding of where the program itself stands, in order to better evaluate student progress.

Centers Program in St. Paul, Minn., said school officials should insist on a much broader measurement of their students and programs, one that considers whether kids are happier, more creative and more self-disciplined--types of evaluation not tabluated on most traditional report cards.

One way to check how students are doing is to ask them--not through exams and quizzes that are seen by many as just a handy means of ranking and separating students--but through conferences and written evaluations by the students themselves. For example, at the Murray Road School, Newton, Mass., course records contain two written evaluations, one by the student and one by the teacher as well as a brief description of the course content.

Consider the value of these comments by a student at Nova, an alternative high school in Seattle: "At a regular school there isn't time--time to think, time to do things on my own. Like being at the library and spending a whole day there going through children's books for a special project...." Asked what assignments had been especially satisfying, she said, "Well, the fact that I'm doing algebra, because I didn't do any of that last year. I've just been so scared of it, really scared of math. To be able to just sit down to do it calmly and not get frantic about it. And botany--I'm learning about soils and plants, and the way plants grow, and about seed germination."

Of course, there should be other evaluations as well as the student's own. Here is an evaluation of a student who attended Chicago's Metro School: "Jeff was a 'C' and 'D' student through grammar school, and during his first high school semester he was failing two subjects. Upon entering Metro, he had a generally fatalistic attitude toward his future.... As the semester progressed he moved from a generally irresponsible attitude to one of taking more responsibility for his work.... He made a large reading gain over the semester and is now reading three years above grade level."

Individual evaluations not only help the student, his family and teachers meet his needs but, properly compiled, they provide useful indicators as to the success of a whole school program. For example, in surveys by the Park School for pregnant girls in Grand Rapids, Mich., 35 students indicated they liked it better than their former schools, while only five liked it less. Asked how their learning experiences at Park School compared with previous ones, 36 said they were learning more and only seven said less.

Testing the Basics

Many may say, "All right, broaden evaluation to include criteria and methods we haven't tried before--but you are still going to have to administer the required standardized tests, and that's that." Some alternative school people will find this hard to take.

But unless they can convince their school board and state officials to accept other evaluations instead, they must be prepared to administer such standardized testing as a part of evaluation. Those who protest most about occasional standardized testing to gauge progress in basic reading and math skills give rise to suspicions their school may have something to hide, no matter how much happier the students say they are.

There is a strong concern among alternative school leaders that their schools serve the meat and potatoes of basic education along with the dessert of more exotic elective subjects. Richard Johnson, executive associate of the Center for New Schools in Chicago, said many black students who have tried "free schools" have ended up saying, "What the hell's going on here? I'm not learning anything." Larry Wells, director of Berkeley's Experimental Schools Project, warned that alternative public schools should not be "another kind of cop-out for not delivering basic skills to minority students." Daniel J. Burke, professor of education at Indiana U., agrees: "We don't think the alternative school movement should just be, 'Hey kid, do your own thing.'"

Some Principles for Sound Evaluation

To evaluate is to measure. Any measurement lacks meaning unless the standard is known. For students and schools to be properly evaluated, first there must be standards or criteria against which the evaluation can take place. It is not enough to say Johnny can read well. How well? It is not enough only to say that he can read better than Jane or Jim.

The only measurement that really counts is that which tells how well a student has progressed along a standard. So, before meaningful evaluation can take place, student and school objectives must be carefully determined, thoughtful educators advise.

To be successful--which means useful--these objectives have to be understood and accepted by students, teachers and parents. The feedback processes must be rapid enough to then help improve performance. A teacher who administers a standardized test without following up by discussing with the student what the results show, is indicating that the test was not really meant to help the student, but merely to place him at some point in the student hierarchy. No wonder students don't like such tests.

Schools should not be limited to just one or two types of evaluation. Since most kinds of evaluation tell you something, but not everything, there is value in having multiple gauges.

Finally, evaluation methods should be structured into a school program at the onset. You need to know where you came from, to know where you are now and where you are going. But there is no sense in sticking with an evaluation process that isn't doing the job, that really isn't telling students and teachers what they need to know about their work. There's a danger that the educational process will outgrow the evaluation structure, causing it to no longer fit the situation. If a means of evaluation isn't helping people do a better job, it's in the way and ought to be discarded for something more relevant.

Still Too Early

When Crisis in the Classroom was published in 1970, Charles E. Silberman discussed several alternative schools and concluded, "None as yet can be judged a success; they are still too new and too tentative and experimental."

This statement still applies to most alternative schools. Even when one has been operating for several years, an alternative school's results are not easily comparable with those of other schools, with other kinds of students and other objectives. The most meaningful evaluation is how a school and its students are progressing toward meeting their own objectives, proponents of alternative schools say.

For example, Seattle's Meany Middle School has five basic objectives:

- To reduce absenteeism by 20% from the previous year.
- To reduce suspensions by 20% from the previous year.
- To raise reading by one grade level over the previous year.
- To raise mathematics performance by one grade level over the previous year.
- To improve students' self-concepts.

COSTS AND FINANCING

The idea for the Philadelphia Parkway Program's "School Without Walls" originated when school officials were faced with the need to find an equivalent for a new 2,400-student high school without committing the school system to an $18 million capital expenditure that would involve a four- or five-year wait for construction to be completed. Many other alternative schools have similar dollars and cents arguments going for them, one of the better persuaders in this age of spiraling budgets.

Capital costs can be eliminated not only in "school without walls" programs that largely utilize a variety of public and private meeting places but also in an alternative school that is quartered in one location, such as an old office building, store or house. The rent required rarely is even close to the long-term debt servicing that would be required for a new school building. If the student population shifts or the program changes, school officials aren't stuck with a school they don't want where they don't need it. Nonschool buildings have a symbolic value that often makes up for their lack of gymnasiums and public address systems. If alternative school people could choose "between an old school plant, a new school plant and a supermarket, they would take the supermarket because it indicates a new ballgame," Jim Moore of the Florida State Dept. of Education said.

Alternative schools often save capital expenditures because they do not attempt to include all the facilities generally thought essential for a new school building. The students, instead, may make use of the city library, may take their art courses at the public museum, may bring their lunches and eat in an informal lounge, and may satisfy physical education requirements at a nearby elementary school. Though it may offend some to say it, such features are not essential and their absence will not prevent most students from applying for an alternative school if its central program is good.

Alternative schools may be able to operate at less than the school system's average per-pupil cost, or their operating budgets may be considerably higher, depending on the type of program. One big saving often can come from extensive use of volunteers. John Bremer, original director of the Parkway Program, said, "Parkway flourishes only because of those who give their services, whether these donors are private individuals or corporations. If it were possible to compute the cost of these volunteers, no doubt Parkway would be very expensive; but it is not necessary to do so, since the larger community gives service when it would not give money."

With paid employes, savings can also be made by including in the school staff, talented part timers who do not expect the salary or many of the fringe

benefits awarded full-time teachers. Education associations and teacher unions are likely to sharply resist the use of such part-time aides, assistants and tutors. Many school officials argue, however, that sometimes one full-time teacher and a couple of part-time aides are just as effective as two full-time teachers.

Don Glines, first director of Wilson School in Mankato, Minn., said, "If you want to save money, fire all the assistant principals." This may not be realistic but, with a small alternative school, it may be quite feasible to put all administrators back in the classroom at least part of the time.

The alternative schools likely to cost more than a school system's average per-capita expenditure are those established for academically failing and disruptive students and others with special problems. If a boy hasn't learned how to read in classes of 30 students to one teacher, then he must get the closer attention offered by very small classes. But here, the cost should not be measured against that for an average student who does not have such basic remedial needs, but against the cost to the community if that boy is left to enter the world of work functionally illiterate.

Saving Students Vs. Saving Money

A brochure on the St. Paul Open School maintains: "One of the goals of this project is to demonstrate that with sufficient equipment and materials, as much learning can take place with fewer professional teachers. Initially, the money saved on teaching staff will be put into the 'stuff' of learning. Eventually, it is hoped, real financial savings may result. If, in addition, learning is improved, then a real breakthrough in education will have occurred." Robert Bhaerman in American Teacher pointed critically to this passage as putting the emphasis in the wrong place. Alternative schools should not be sold as merely an easy means of cutting costs. Since they are run by human beings, they probably won't reduce costs substantially. More importantly, putting the focus on cost-cutting is wrong, proponents of alternative schools say.

"The solution to the crisis facing American education is not financial. It is in providing learning options for a plurality of publics who invest more than their tax dollars in the educational system," Daniel J. Burke, education professor at Indiana U., said.

Starting on an Average Budget

"You really can create small parts of an alternative school program overnight. Get something going so you have something to look at," Glines urged. "It doesn't take federal funding to do it. Start on a small scale, but start now," he added. Incidentally, the Wilson School offers a year-round open program for the kindergarten through 12th-grade level for the same per-pupil expenditures (about $740 per pupil) as other Mankato, Minn., public schools. Spending no more per pupil in an alternative school than in other traditional schools in a system provides administrators an opportunity to show skeptical observers that there is much more to a school than extra

funds. "If we can do this through reallocation of present resources, I think we are better off," said Jim Moore.

Grantsmanship—A Self-Defeating Skill?

Of course, few people can resist a federal or foundation grant dangling before them. Such outside money often can offset the added cost of initial planning or in-depth review of an experimental project. Some alternative school proponents advise, however, that outside money can do more harm than good to a new alternative program. "Outside funds can be detrimental to an alternative school if they pay for part of per-pupil costs," according to Vernon H. Smith, codirector of Indiana U.'s Educational Alternatives Project. "History tells us," he says, "that when the funds stop, the program stops." But most school officials will never face such temptations for alternative school programs because the grants just aren't there.

With several major exceptions, the U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) has little money to offer. These exceptions are Berkeley, Calif.; Minneapolis; and Franklin Pierce School District, Pierce County Wash.--school systems that are sharing in $12 million allocated under the U.S. Office of Education's (USOE) Experimental Schools Program. The three school systems are slated to receive federal funding for five years. It is unclear to what extent, if any, their experimental schools may be federally financed after that.

The three school systems were chosen from among eight that had been awarded $10,000 planning grants. The eight were selected from 489 applicants. For the second round of the experimental program, these school systems and institutions were picked to receive small amounts of planning money: Chicago; Gary, Ind.; Newark; New Rochelle, N.Y.; Greenville, S.C.; San Antonio, Tex.; Vermont State Dept. of Education; U. of North Dakota; and Federation of Independent Community Schools, Milwaukee. HEW will select three to five of them for operational grants.

Robert B. Binswanger, director of the Experimental Schools Program, said experimentation in American education has tended to be piecemeal. "What the Experimental Schools Program is after is to test the hypothesis that if you try to change a whole system, K-12, all at the same time, starting with a base of between 2,000 and 5,000 children, then maybe, only maybe, you'll have some kind of change, some kind of reform, some kind of movement and commitment to the kind of things USOE has been working on for a great number of years. This is a high risk, high gain kind of program," he said.

Some private foundations may offer funding for planning an alternative school program or for certain one-time-only costs. But if alternative schools are to be part of public school systems, they must expect their support to come from the same tax sources that have always been the foundation for public education.

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